

ORB3

CELEBRATING OFFENBACH

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CD1

[1] *Le Voyage dans la lune*

Opéra-féerie in four acts

Libretto by Albert Vanloo, Eugène Leterrier and Arnold Mortier

First performance: 26 October 1875

Théâtre de la Gaîté, Paris

Overture

An Offenbach overture is often far more than a mere potpourri of themes, commonly containing music that does not appear elsewhere in the opera. This was one of the ways in which Offenbach made it clear to his public that he was a serious composer – even though he wrote comic works. The overture to *Le Voyage dans la lune* is one of his most memorable. After a fanfare-like opening, its *andante* section is launched by a beautiful horn melody that does not feature in the opera itself, and which took on another life when it was appropriated in 1907 by the impresario Raoul Gunsbourg and the composer André Bloch for use as an aria, ‘Scintille, diamant’, for the character Dapertutto in *Les Contes d’Hoffmann*; it was subsequently inserted, without comment, into printed editions of the score of *Hoffmann*. The *allegro vivo* introduces us to the ‘Galop Final’ which concludes the snowflakes ballet (‘Ballet des flocons de neige’) in Act III, accelerating to an exhilarating conclusion.

[2] *Geneviève de Brabant*

Opéra-bouffe in three acts

Libretto by Hector Crémieux and Étienne Tréfeu

First performance: 26 December 1867

Théâtre des Menus-Plaisirs, Paris

‘Rondo du pâté’

Drogan ... Cassandre Berthon

Geoffrey Mitchell Choir

OFFENBACH left no fewer than three versions of *Geneviève de Brabant*, each substantially differing from the others. The second version, represented here, is considered to be *Geneviève*’s most satisfactory incarnation. The original *Geneviève* opened at the Bouffes-Parisiens in 1859, a time when Offenbach could have chosen to rest on his laurels after the success of his 1858 *Orphée aux Enfers*. Instead, he continued to produce large quantities of new work.

The premiere of *Geneviève* generated a frenzy, attended by many Parisian glitterati; armed guards were required to keep the crowds at bay in the streets outside the theatre. But a mixed reception on the night set Offenbach to work cutting and making alterations even before the second performance. Things improved, but the run only continued for about two months. The improbable aspects of the story prompted the critic Hequet to write that ‘the silly elements were really way too silly.’ But the music became extremely popular and enjoyed a life of its own, as described by Golo: ‘*Geneviève* is sung, *Geneviève* is danced, *Geneviève* is the delight of our salons and dance-halls, and our vaudevillistes.’

Geneviève de Brabant was seen in Vienna in 1861. In 1867, when the recently renovated Théâtre des Menus-Plaisirs urgently appealed to Offenbach for a new piece to bolster its flagging box office, he responded with a revised *Geneviève*. Those performances coincided with the appearance of his *Robinson Crusoé* at the

Opéra-Comique; given the widely differing social status of those theatres, this sent out very mixed messages about the sort of composer he was trying to be. The second production of *Geneviève*, like the first, was given in lavish style. Its surprise hit was the 'Duo des deux hommes d'armes' (known in the English-speaking world as the 'Gendarmes Duet'), which, though incidental to the plot, became so celebrated that a picture of the Gendarmes was emblazoned on the front cover of the new vocal score. Also new was the role of the pâtissier Drogan, star of this excerpt, played by the popular Zulma Bouffar, an important figure in Offenbach's life and work. Bouffar's gamine appearance made her a natural for trouser roles such as this.

Sifroy, Duke of Curaçao, is married to the beautiful Geneviève of Brabant, but he is under a curse that prevents him from being able to father an heir. The pâtissier Drogan produces a magic pie that is supposed to restore his fertility. In the event, it only gives him indigestion.

RÉCIT ET RONDO DU PÂTÉ

DROGAN

Salut, salut, noble assemblée,
Je vous apporte un remède certain;
Fait pour une tête couronnée,
Il ne peut qu'être souverain.
C'est, messieurs, un pâté!

Greetings, greetings, noble assembly,
I bring you a sure remedy;
one fit for a king,
a sovereign remedy, no less.
It is, gentlemen, a pie!

CHORUS

Un pâté!

A pie!

DROGAN

Contemplez ce pâté!

Look at this pie!

CHORUS

Quel pâté?

What pie?

DROGAN

Attendez et regardez!

Wait and see!

CHORUS

Attendons, regardons!

Wait and see!

DROGAN

C'est un pâté qui renferme
Du veau mêlé de jambon!

It's a pie stuffed
with a mixture of veal and ham!

CHORUS

De jambon!

Ham!

DROGAN

Quoique fait de pâté ferme,
Aussi léger qu'il est bon!

Although made with a hard crust,
it's as light as it's delicious!

CHORUS

Qu'il est bon!

It is delicious!

DROGAN

Rafraîchissant et tonique

Both refreshing and invigorating,

Par son heureuse combinaison,
D'une bonne politique
Il est l'expression.
Saluez, ô bourguemaître,
Car il est content dans son flanc
L'héritier de votre maître
Et l'avenir du Brabant.

C'est un pâté, *etc.*

Par sa vertu singulière,
Il laisse derrière lui
La douce revalésière
De l'enchanteur Dubarry:
C'est de la Reine des fées
Qu'il tient ses dons éclatants,
Chacune de ses bouchées
Vous rajeunit de cinq ans.
Si par amour de la science,
En attendant, vous voulez
Sur vous faire une expérience,
Ne vous gênez pas, parlez, parlez.
Par ses effets inestimables
Sur l'imagination,
Il rend les maris aimables
Après quinze ans d'union!
Au nom de vos moitiés,
Il faut que vous en goûtiez.
C'est un pâté, *etc.*

Si par amour de la science,
En attendant, nous voulons
Sur nous faire une expérience,
Ne nous gênons pas.
Gloire, honneur, gloire au marmiton!
Gloire, honneur au jambon!

thanks to its felicitous blend of ingredients,
it is the epitome
of good politics.
Rejoice, O Burgomaster,
for contained within its crust
is your master's heir
and the future of Brabant.

DROGAN

It's a pie, *etc.*

DROGAN

Because of its singular attributes
it has the same effect
as the sweet tonic
of Dubarry the magician:
It's to the Queen of the Fairies
that it owes its dazzling properties,
every mouthful
taking five years off your age.
If, for the love of science,
you wish to experience
something special right now,
don't be shy, speak up, speak up.
Its invaluable effect
upon the imagination
makes husbands attractive
even after fifteen years of marriage!
For the sake of your other half
you must taste it.
It's a pie, *etc.*

CHORUS

If, through a love of science,
we wish to experience
something special right now,
we won't be shy.
Glory, honour, glory to the kitchen-boy!
Glory, honour to the ham!

[3] *La Jolie Parfumeuse*

Opéra-comique in three acts

Libretto by Hector Crémieux and Ernest Blum

First performance: 29 November 1873

Théâtre de la Renaissance, Paris

'Je peins, je crayonne'

Poirot ... Loïc Félix Rose ... Elizabeth Vidal Bavolet ... Alexandra Sherman

Geoffrey Mitchell Choir

Prior to the premiere of *La Jolie Parfumeuse* (The Beautiful Perfume-Shop Lady), Offenbach's career had hit one of its lowest points: his triumphant collaboration with the librettists Meilhac and Halévy was effectively over and, after some 18 years of non-stop, high-profile productions, many critics had wearied of his works.

Offenbach's chief rival was Charles Lecocq, who in 1856 had been the co-winner, along with Georges Bizet, of a composing competition set up by Offenbach himself. Lecocq's works belong to the same line of French light opera as those of Auber and Adam, more notable for their charming, delightful qualities than the satirical works Offenbach had been writing. In 1872, Lecocq produced his most successful operetta *La Fille de Madame Angot*. Offenbach, responding to fashion as always, produced *La Jolie Parfumeuse* in a similar 'charming' style, featuring an 18th-century setting and a strong dash of the risqué. The risqué elements caused him trouble with the censor, but he nevertheless succeeded in depicting the invented ritual whereby a new bride symbolically removes her garter, in full view of the audience, with the beautiful Louise Théo standing on a table.

La Jolie Parfumeuse found favour with critics and public alike, and ran for four months, giving Offenbach's career a much-needed boost. The *Revue et Gazette musicale de Paris* was aware that Offenbach had responded to the new taste, writing that it represented 'a new genre, in which we abandon the eccentricities and farcical elements that fashioned the distinctive character of the *opéra-bouffé*, to find a light intrigue, on which the composer can embroider music of a more elevated kind.' Among the musical numbers, the 'Painter's aria', heard here, was considered particularly fine, and is a good example of Offenbach's new style.

Bavolet, a clerk of the public prosecutor, is to marry Rose, the beautiful perfumeshop lady of the title. The wedding celebrations are in full swing at the Cabaret des Porcherons. Their friend Poirot – in reality, a Swiss hotel-worker – is masquerading as a Polish painter, to the delight of the assembled guests.

POIROT

Je peins, je crayonne et dessine.

Je peins des tableaux, des portraits.

Je peins, et d'une main divine,

Une tête fine

Sévère ou badine

Et je la rends traits pour traits.

Je peins, ma brosse immortalise.

Je peins des têtes de héros,

Je peins des minois de marquise.

Ma palette exquise

I paint, sketch and draw.

I do pictures, portraiture.

I paint, with consummate mastery,

heads that may be delicate,

austere or playful

and I render every detail.

I paint, my brush immortalises.

I paint the heads of heroes,

I paint the faces of fine ladies.

My exquisite palette

Les idéalise
Et mes clients sont tous beaux.
Oui, des célébrités modernes,
Moi, je brave le renom.
Et les cabarets, les tavernes
Retentissent de mon nom.
Et si, par le bon goût conduite,
Madame de Pompadour avait connu mon mérite,
Elle aurait lâché Latour.
Je peins, je peins, je peins, je peins!

idealises them
so that my clients are all beautiful.
I am not afraid of these
new celebrities and all their fame.
The taverns and coffee-houses
resound with my name.
And if Madame de Pompadour,
a lady of good taste, had known about my skill,
she would have abandoned Latour.
I paint, I paint, I paint, I paint!

ROSE, BAVOLET, CHORUS

Il peint!

He paints!

POIROT

M'sieu Boucher, à sa manière,
Vous fait des d'sus d'portes. Moi,
Je vous fais un'porte entière,
Et plus vir' que lui ma foi!
Dir' que dans l'siècle où nous sommes,
On parl' de Mossieu Watteau!
Tout ça, ça n'est pas des hommes,
C'est des peintr' qui n'boiv' que d't'eau!
Je peins, ma brosse immortalise, *etc.*

Boucher might, in his fashion,
do you a bit of detail on a doorway. Me,
I'll do you the whole door,
and quicker than him, I'd say!
Would you believe in this here century
Mr Watteau's the talk of the town!
These chaps aren't real men,
these painters are all milksops!
I paint, my brush immortalises, *etc.*

ROSE, BAVOLET, CHORUS

Il peint, sa brosse immortalise, *etc.*

He paints, his brush immortalises, *etc.*

[4] *La Jolie Parfumeuse*

'Pardieu!'

Germain ... Mark Stone

*Germain, the manservant of Bavolet's godfather, the affluent rake Chrysostome La Cocardière, explains what a
delightful life he leads.*

AIR DE L'INTENDANT

GERMAIN

Pardieu! C'est une aimable charge,
Que de servir un grand seigneur,
La vie à ses côtés est large
Et le profit en vaut l'honneur!
Chacun de nous sait, et de reste,
Y prendre de joyeux ébats:
Valet de chambre, on met sa veste,
Cuisinier, on mange ses plats.

By Jove! It's a pleasant job,
to serve a lord,
life with him means a life of plenty
and the perks are as worthwhile as the honour!
Each of us knows very well
how to have fun:
The valet tries on his clothes,
the cook eats his dishes.

Quand notre bon maître s'absente la nuit,
C'est pour nous permettre
De veiller chez lui.
Comptons sa vaisselle
Et ses plats d'argent,
Mettons avec zèle
Le p'tit dans le grand.
Visitons sa cave,
Dégustons son vin,
Voyons si le Grave,
Vaut le Chambertin.
Les vins qu'il préfère
Nous les sablerons,
Ce qui peut lui plaire
Nous le choisirons.
Suivant ses modèles
À Lise ou Marton
Serviteurs fidèles,
Prenons le menton.
C'est un devoir même
De prouver ainsi
Que tout ce qu'il aime
Nous l'aimons aussi.
Pardieu! C'est une aimable charge, *etc.*

When the good master spends the night away,
it gives us the chance
to stay up in his house.
We check out his services
and his silver platters.
We dine lavishly
like fine gentlemen.
We visit his cellar,
taste his wine,
let's see if the Graves
is as good as the Chambertin.
The wines he prefers
we down in a gulp,
if he likes something,
that's what we choose.
Following his example,
as we are loyal servants,
we flirt
with Lise and Marton.
We count it our duty
to prove in this way
that all that is dear to him
is also dear to us.
By Jove! It's a pleasant job, *etc.*

[5] *La Jolie Parfumeuse*

'Air de Polacca'

Clorinde ... Laura Claycomb

Rose, the 'Jolie Parfumeuse', has been abducted by her husband's godfather, the wealthy Chrysostome La Cocardière, who now finds himself the object of the attentions of two beautiful dancers from the Opéra: Clorinde and Arthémise.

Clorinde offers herself to him, with the warning that she might be quite an expensive lady to keep.

CLORINDE

Cher et noble La Cocardière
Nous vous offrons, et de bon coeur,
Cette couronne printanière
Emblème de votre candeur.
Que pourrait-on pour votre fête
Vous souhaiter, roi des traitants?
Ah! Ma foi! Mon cher, je vous souhaite
De me conserver bien longtemps.

Dear, noble La Cocardière
we present you, and willingly,
with this garland of spring flowers,
symbol of your guilelessness.
For your celebration, what can we
wish you, king of tax collectors?
Ah! My word! My dear, I wish you
to keep me for a long time.

Sur les anciens et leur idiome,
À l'Opéra l'on n'est pas fort!
On sait pourtant que Chrysostome
Signifie en grec « bouche d'or »,
Et si l'amour à vous s'adresse
C'est qu'en déposant un bécot,
Sur cette bouche enchanteresse
Il peut y cueillir un lingot.
Cher et noble La Cocardière, *etc.*

About the ancients and their languages
we're no experts at the Opéra!
We know, however, that Chrysostomos
signified 'golden mouthed' in Greek.
So if Cupid speaks to you
it's because, by planting a kiss
on these enchanting lips,
he might reap a bar of gold.
Dear, noble La Cocardière, *etc.*

[6] *Le Pont des soupirs*

Opéra-bouffon in two acts

Libretto by Isaac Crémieux and Ludovic Halévy

First performance: 23 March 1861

Théâtre des Bouffes-Parisiens, Paris

'Ah! Le Doge!'

Catarina ... Elizabeth Vidal Malatromba ... Colin Lee Cornarino ... Mark Wilde Baptiste ... Loïc Félix
Astolfo ... Mark Stone Franrusto ... André Cognet

Le Pont des soupirs (1861) reunited Offenbach with the librettists Crémieux and Halévy, the creative team that had produced the wildly successful *Orphée aux Enfers* (1858) and *La Chanson de Fortunio* (1861). Offenbach had high hopes of this piece, in particular because other two-act works he had staged since *Orphée*, including *Geneviève de Brabant*, had not achieved the popularity he had hoped for.

He delayed the premiere of *Le Pont des soupirs* because of the enormous sense of anticipation in Paris surrounding the first production there of Wagner's *Tannhäuser* – in the event, a scandal that saw just three performances. Offenbach had included a parody of Wagner the previous year in his revue *Le Carnaval des revues* (1860), though he was an admirer of Wagner's music. Wagner, in turn, described Offenbach's works as 'the dung-heap upon which all the swine of Europe wallowed.'

Set in Venice, *Le Pont des soupirs* is a parody of romantic melodrama with a strong dash of Offenbachian burlesque thrown in. It was well received in the press, but its 66 performances pale in comparison to the 228 notched up by *Orphée*. Contemporary critics carped about the incongruity of a Spanish bolero (heard here) in a piece set in Venice. In fact, the characters' longing for Spain is a pretext for Offenbach to indulge his penchant for pseudo-Spanish music in a piece of characteristically zany humour. The Spanish theme would run throughout Offenbach's career, and in 1878 resulted in the *opéra-bouffe* *Maître Péronilla* (see page 61).

The Doge Cornarino and his valet, Baptiste, have fled from a battle and are wanted men. They have disguised themselves as beggars and infiltrate the royal palace, where Cornarino's wife, Catarina, is being courted by a number of admirers, including the would-be Doge, Malatromba. During this scene, Catarina feigns madness in a vain attempt to escape the unwanted advances of Malatromba; Malatromba strikes up a bolero, joined by Cornarino and Baptiste and the spies Astolfo and Franrusto, who are all hiding inside barometers and clocks.

SCÈNE DE FOLIE

CATARINA

Ah! le Doge! Ah! les ponts, le canal Orfano,
L'Adriatique ; c'est fini, je suis folle.
Mon ami! Ah! mon ami!
Laisse moi t'appeler ainsi.
Ne trouble, par aucune phrase,
La divine extase
De mes sens ravis!
J'ai vu des hommes bien jolis,
Mais jamais, cher ange, crois-moi,
Jamais aussi jolis que toi!
J'irai plus loin et j'avouerai même,
Ô mon chevalier, que je t'aime!

Ah, the Doge, ah, the bridges, the Orfano canal,
the Adriatic! It's all over, I've gone mad.
My love! Ah, my love!
Let me call you by that name.
Do not disturb with a single word
the divine ecstasy
of my ravished senses!
I've seen very handsome men,
but never, my angel, believe me,
never one as handsome as you!
I'll go further, I'll even confess,
O my Knight, that I love you!

MALATROMBA

Tu m'aimes!

You love me!

CATARINA

Je t'aime.

I love you.

MALATROMBA

Elle m'aime.

She loves me.

CATARINA

Je t'aime.

I love you.

MALATROMBA

Ah! Profitons lâchement
De son égarement.

Ah! Let's take advantage shamelessly
of her distracted state of mind.

CATARINA

Ici comment hélas! m'arracher de ses bras?

Alas, how can I tear myself from his arms?

MALATROMBA

Eh bien, partons tous deux.

So come, let's go together.

CATARINA

Oui, oui, quittons ces lieux.

Yes, yes, let's leave this place.

CATARINA, MALATROMBA

Que nous serons heureux
Tous deux.
Je connais au loin
Un tout petit coin
Fait pour les amours,
Et là tous deux, tous les jours,
Nous nous adorerons,
Nous nous câlinerons.

How happy we will be,
just the two of us!
I know of a far-away,
small secluded place
just made for love,
and there we shall spend every day
in mutual adoration,
Ah! in each other's arms. Ah!

BOLÉRO

MALATROMBA

C'est un coin tout petit au fin fond des Espagnes,
Un petit coin blotti dans de vertes campagnes,
Que le soleil rôtit au fin fond des Espagnes.
C'est un coin tout petit au fin fond des Espagnes,
Allons vivre tous deux
Au fin fond de toutes les Espagnes.
Viens, nous serons heureux
Au fin fond de toutes les Espagnes.

There's a secluded place in the heart of Spain,
a small place nestling in green countryside,
baked by the sun deep in the heart of Spain.
There's a secluded place in the heart of Spain,
Let's go and live there together,
deep in the very heart of Spain.
Come, we will be happy
deep in the very heart of Spain.

CATARINA

Boléro, Fandango, Cachucha, et voilà!
Ah! Le beau pays que ça fait tout ça.
Les forêts y sont faites en bois des castagnettes
Et ce produit du sol
Suffit à l'Espagnol.
Sans tambour ni trompette,
Mais avec castagnettes,
Il danse tout le temps
Des pas extravagants.

Bolero, Fandango, Cachucha, and all the rest!
Ah! How fair the land that has all this.
Where forests are full of wood for castanets,
and this bounty from the soil
is all a Spaniard needs.
With neither drum nor trumpet
but only castanets
he'll dance flamboyantly
around the clock.

CATARINA, MALATROMBA

La la la!

La la la!

MALATROMBA, CATARINA, CORNARINO, BAPTISTE, ASTOLFO, FRANRUSTO

C'est un coin tout petit, *etc.*
La, la, la!

There's a small secluded place, *etc.*
La, la, la!

[7] *Les Braconniers*

Opéra-bouffe in three acts

Libretto by Henri-Charles Chivot and Henri-Alfred Duru

First performance: 29 January 1873

Théâtre des Variétés, Paris

'Oh! Ma chère femme'

Ginetta ... Diana Montague Marcassou ... Mark le Brocq

If the first important theatre in Offenbach's life was the Bouffes-Parisiens, whose high point was *Orphée aux Enfers* in 1858, the scene of his subsequent triumphs in collaboration with the librettists Meilhac and Halévy was the Théâtre des Variétés, which hosted the premieres of almost all of the other Offenbach operettas that remain in the repertoire today: *La Belle Hélène*, *Barbe-Bleue*, *La Grande-Duchesse de Gérolstein*, *La Périhole*, *Les Brigands*.

By 1873, Offenbach was seriously affected by gout, walking very little and travelling around in a coupé. Following his busy period with *Boule de neige*, *Le Roi Carotte* and *Fantasio* in late 1871 and early 1872, he

produced no new works in Paris between May 1872 and January 1873, the first time since 1855 that there had been such a gap in his output. He regained focus with his work for the Théâtre des Variétés: firstly with a revival of *Les Brigands* in October 1872, then with a new piece, *Les Braconniers*, which opened in January 1873.

Offenbach's return to the Variétés with *Les Braconniers* was hailed as a major event, but the piece did not last long on the boards, despite being quite well received by the public. A tale about poachers, some critics picked up on its similarities with *Les Brigands* ('a known subject, old-new,' wrote *L'Illustration*), though it lacked the satirical element of its predecessor and was a vehicle mainly for amusing situations and misunderstandings. By this point, with the Meilhac and Halévy collaboration effectively over, satire did not feature large in new Offenbach works, his preoccupations now being with works in the *opera-féerie* style (see page 22), and operettas with a greater element of charm, such as *La Jolie Parfumeuse* which followed ten months later.

Les Braconniers was constructed around the talents of two divas: Zulma Bouffar (Ginetta) and the newcomer Marie Heilbronn (Bibleto), who was later to create the title role in Massenet's *Manon*. Bouffar perceived Heilbronn as a threat, a feeling that may have been exacerbated by the fact that Heilbronn had been cast in a *rôle travesti*, which was often Bouffar's province. Bouffar asked the theatre manager, Bertrand, to intervene in a conflict about the music for her first entrance, which she felt needed to be particularly strong. The duet heard here, in which Marcassou details everything he loves in Ginetta, in fact contains a physical description of Zulma Bouffar herself, clearly intended to please her, and possibly referencing terms of endearment used between her and Offenbach in their private lives.

In the time of Louis XV, the muleteer Marcassou is preparing to marry Ginetta, the barber's niece. Some poachers are hiding in the local tavern, plotting to kidnap Marcassou after the wedding. At the wedding, Marcassou and Ginetta celebrate their love – in considerable detail...

MARCASSOU

Oh! Ma chère femme!

Oh, my dear wife!

GINETTA

Oh! Mon cher mari!

Oh, my dear husband!

MARCASSOU

Mon trésor, mon âme!

My treasure, my soul!

GINETTA

Mon époux chéri!

My darling spouse!

MARCASSOU

Que j'aime tes yeux éveillés!

How I love your sparkling eyes!

GINETTA

Que j'aime ta noble tournure!

How I love your noble form!

MARCASSOU

Que j'aime tes cheveux bouclés!

How I love your curly hair!

GINETTA

Que j'aime ta haute stature!

How I love your stately height!

MARCASSOU

Que j'aime ton nez retroussé!

How I love your turned-up nose!

GINETTA

Que j'aime tes blanches quenottes!

How I love your little toothypegs!

MARCASSOU

Que j'aime ton sein oppressé!

How I love your laced-in bosom!

GINETTA

Que j'aime tes vastes menottes!

How I love your great big paws!

GINETTA, MARCASSOU

J'aime, j'aime, j'aime, j'aime
tout en toi, tout en toi, tout en toi!

I love, I love, I love, I love
everything about you, everything about you!

MARCASSOU

Ta grâce, ta bonne mine!

Your gracefulness, your lovely face!

GINETTA

J'aime, j'aime tout ce que je vois!

I love, I love everything I see!

GINETTA, MARCASSOU

J'aime, j'aime, j'aime, j'aime
tout ce que je vois
Et tout ce que je devine!

I love, I love, I love, I love
everything I see
and everything I imagine!

MARCASSOU

Que j'aime ton joli menton!

How I love your pretty chin!

GINETTA

Que j'aime ta joue empourprée!

How I love your rosy cheeks!

MARCASSOU

Que j'aime ton gentil peton!

How I love your dainty foot!

GINETTA

Que j'aime ta jambe cambrée!

How I love your shapely leg!

MARCASSOU

Que j'aime ton air friponeau!

How I love your roguish air!

GINETTA

Que j'aime ta prunelle douce!

How I love the look in your eye!

MARCASSOU

Que j'aime ton petit museau!

How I love your little muzzle!

GINETTA

Que j'aime ta grosse frimousse!

How I love your big mug!

GINETTA, MARCASSOU

J'aime, j'aime, j'aime, j'aime
tout en toi, tout en toi, tout en toi! *etc.*

I love, I love, I love, I love
everything about you, everything about you! *etc.*

[8] *La Permission de dix heures*

Opéra-comique in one act

Libretto by Pierre Carmouche and Mélesville (Honoré Duveyrier)

First performance: 9 July 1867

Kursaal, Bad Ems

'Ah! Quelle douce ivresse!'

Nicole ... Elizabeth Vidal Madame Jobin ... Yvonne Kenny Lanternick ... Mark Wilde

Larose ... Mark Stone Broussailles ... André Cognet

In the spring of 1867, Offenbach enjoyed the biggest commercial success of his career: *La Grande-Duchesse de Gérolstein*, commissioned for that year's Universal Exhibition in Paris, to a libretto by the collaborators of the triumphant *La Belle Hélène* of 1864, Henri Meilhac and Ludovic Halévy. Major world leaders and political figures attending the Exhibition went to see Offenbach's new piece. With Bismarck's campaigns at their height, the libretto of *La Grande-Duchesse* was potentially explosive material, featuring a grand duchess who plans war on a whim to stave off boredom and distract from trivial problems at home. Offenbach and his librettists were obliged to make many changes to satisfy the censors, who were afraid of offending their honoured guests.

As Halévy wrote: 'This time we are laughing at war, and war is at our gates.' But, in the event, there was no controversy. Instead, there were 200 performances to packed houses running until November 1867. Bismarck himself attended a performance, and wrote afterwards: 'We are getting rid of the Gérolsteins, soon there will be none left. I am grateful to your Parisian artistes for showing the world how ridiculous they were.'

Three months after the opening of *La Grande-Duchesse de Gérolstein*, Offenbach took his summer holiday at Bad Ems, now part of Bismarck's newly unified Northern Germany. While there, as well as relaxing and gambling, he put on two one-act works to commemorate a visit by King William of Prussia: *Le Leçon de chant*, a duo that had already played for four weeks at the Folies-Marigny; and *La Permission de dix heures*, a new one-act *opéra-comique* to a libretto by Mélesville (Honoré Duveyrier) and Pierre Carmouche (with contributions from Charles Nutter).

The marble salon of the Kursaal in Bad Ems, appropriated by Offenbach as a performance venue, was by nature limited in terms of the theatrical works it could present. Nevertheless, *La Permission* is longer and more substantial than the kind of one-acters he had been writing for the Bouffes, containing an overture and nine numbers, several of which were ensembles. This piece, coming halfway between the 1855 opening of the Bouffes-Parisiens and Offenbach's death, is an ideal point at which to assess the development of his musical language. He still composes essentially in short numbers or sections, building up the bigger picture by contrast between them; but whereas in his early days the numbers had generally been a single musical section highlighting one moment in the plot, he can now incorporate new dramatic action by juxtaposing several musical units effectively.

By this point Offenbach had written extended finales in such works as *La Grande-Duchesse* and had lived through the lyrical exertions of his *Die Rheinnixen* (1864), in which he had grappled with large-scale operatic forms in a way not previously encountered in his output. His orchestration is also more sophisticated and eventful than previously. In the second excerpt, Nicole's elegant couplets 'Allons!, ne vous désolés pas' are offset by the spoken exclamations of Lanternick, obviously intended as a figure of amusement on account of his Alsatian accent. The first excerpt, 'Morceau d'ensemble' consists of three contrasting sections, following an

Italianate trajectory from *cantabile* section ‘Ah! Quelle douce ivresse’ through *tempo di mezzo* ‘Vous me quittez déjà?’, culminating in a cabaletta, ‘Ah! c’est bien un baiser tendre!’, a typically Offenbachian gimmick. Some ten years later, Emmanuel Chabrier included a ‘Quatuor des baisers’ (kissing quartet) in his *L’Étoile* (1877), a work that received its premiere at the Bouffes-Parisiens, and which builds on Offenbachian tradition; in England, Gilbert and Sullivan wrote a famous ‘kissing duet’ in *The Mikado* (1885).

The opera is set in the 18th century. One night, the two soldiers Larose Pompon and Lanternick, who has a pronounced Alsatian accent, have a 10-hour leave (a ‘permission de dix heures’). Each makes an assignation with his loved one, Larose with Nicole, Lanternick with Madame Jobin, arousing the suspicion of the local policeman, Broussailles. In the dark, each soldier pays court to the wrong woman.

NICOLE, LANTERNICK

Ah! Quelle douce ivresse,
Dans l’ombre et le secret,
De peindre sa tendresse
À l’objet qui nous plaît.

Ah! What sweet rapture,
in the shadows and in secret
to show tenderness
towards the one you love.

BROUSSAILLES

J’ai vu sur les épis
Voltiger un chapeau,
Guettons le god’lureau,
Guettons le god’lureau.
Garde municipal,
J’ tiens mon procès verbal!
(*il disparaît*)

I’ve seen above the corn
a hat bobbing up and down.
Keep an eye on this dandy,
keep an eye on this dandy.
As the local policeman,
I’m reporting him!
(*he disappears*)

NICOLE, LANTERNICK, THEN MME JOBIN, LAROSE

Ah! Quelle douce ivresse, *etc.*

Ah! What sweet rapture, *etc.*

MME JOBIN

(*langoureusement*)
Vous me quittez déjà?

(*languorously*)
Are you leaving me already?

LAROSE

(*bas à Mme Jobin*)
On pourrait nous surprendre
et j’ dois sans plis attendre

(*softly to Mme Jobin*)
We could be interrupted,
and I must delay no longer.

MME JOBIN

(*tendrement*)
Mais on vous reverra!

(*lovingly*)
But I’ll see you again!

LAROSE

Foui! Pour le mariache, ce ruban rose
En est le gage. Ponsoir!
(*à Mme Jobin*)
Ponsoir!

Ja! Zis pink ribbon
will be ze pledge of marriage. Good efening!
(*to Mme Jobin*)
Good efening!

MME JOBIN, LAROSE

Au revoir!

Goodbye!

NICOLE

Bonsoir.

Good evening.

LANTERNICK

Bonsoir!

Good evening!

NICOLE, LANTERNICK

Au revoir!

Goodbye!

LANTERNICK, LAROSE

Mais, avant de partir, donnez-moi...

But give me before you leave...

NICOLE, MME JOBIN

Quoi donc?

Give you what?

LANTERNICK, LAROSE

... un baiser!

... a kiss!

Allons!

Come on!

*(Lanternick baise la main de Nicole et Larose
Jobin's.)*

*(Lanternick kisses Nicole's hand and Larose Mme
celle de Mme Jobin.)*

NICOLE, MME JOBIN

Ah! c'est bien un baiser tendre!

Ah! Such a tender kiss!

Non, je ne veux pas le rendre.

No, I don't want to return it.

Oui, c'est bien un baiser tendre!

Yes, it's such a tender kiss!

Non, je ne veux pas le rendre.

No, I don't want to return it.

LANTERNICK, LAROSE

Encore un baiser bien tendre!

Ah! Another tender kiss!

Vous ne voulez pas le rendre?

Will you not return it?

Encore un baiser bien tendre!

Another tender kiss,

Vous ne voulez pas le rendre?

Will you not return it?

NICOLE, MME JOBIN

Ces baisers se perdent dans l'ombre,

These kisses get lost in the shadows.

J'en rougis, mais il fait sombre.

I'm blushing, but it's dark.

Ah! Oui, c'est bien un baiser tendre!

Ah! Yes, such a tender kiss!

Non, je ne veux pas le rendre!

Ah! No, I don't want to return it!

LANTERNICK, LAROSE

Ces baisers se perdent dans l'ombre,

These kisses get lost in the shadows.

Elle en rougit, mais il fait sombre.

She's blushing, but it's dark.

Ah! Oui, c'est bien un baiser tendre!

Ah! Yes, such a tender kiss!

Allons, ya! Il faut vite le rendre!

Please, return it quickly!

[9] *La Permission de dix heures*

‘Allons!’

Nicole ... Elizabeth Vidal Lanternick ... Mark Wilde

Nicole is engaged to Larose Pompon, but is forbidden to marry until her aunt, Madame Jobin, has herself married.

As Madame Jobin has taken a fancy to Lanternick, Nicole now takes delight in playing matchmaker.

NICOLE

1er couplet

Allons! Ne vous désolez pas,
Puisqu’aussi bien la chose est faite.
Sergent, je vous le dis tout bas,
Vous avez fait une conquête.
J’aurais dû garder le secret,
Mais je vous le dis tout de même.
Au moins, sergent, soyez discret.
On vous aime aussi, l’on vous aime.

2eme couplet

Soyez fier de vous, beau vainqueur,
Et sachez qu’il est une femme
Dont votre air a séduit le coeur,
Dont vos galons ont touché l’âme.
Loin de vous souffrant mille maux,
Près de vous son trouble est extrême!
Enfin, pour tout dire en trois mots,
On vous aime aussi, l’on vous aime.

(parlé) Moi! Moi! Moi!

1st couplet

Come on! Don’t be upset.
What’s done is done.
Sergeant, I am telling you in confidence,
you have made a conquest.
I should have kept it secret,
but I’ll tell you anyway.
At least, Sergeant, be discreet.
Somebody loves you too, somebody loves you.

2nd couplet

Pat yourself on the back, handsome conqueror,
and let me tell you that there is a woman
whose heart your looks have seduced,
whose soul your medals have impressed.
Away from you she suffers a thousand ills,
near you she is extremely agitated!
To put it bluntly,
somebody loves you too, somebody loves you.

LANTERNICK

(spoken) Me! Me! Me!

[10] *Vert-Vert*

Opéra-comique in three acts

Libretto by Henri Meilhac and Charles Nutter

First performance: 10 March 1869

Opéra-Comique, Paris

‘**Oraison Funèbre**’

Valentin ... Colin Lee Mimi ... Yvonne Kenny Bathilde ... Diana Montague Emma ... Alexandra Sherman

Geoffrey Mitchell Choir

Vert-Vert (1869) is the third of the five works that Offenbach composed for the Opéra-Comique. These were all important milestones for him personally, though he never enjoyed an unqualified success at that venue. The first, *Barkouf*, was a disaster (see page 47); the second, *Robinson Crusoé* (1867), a very ambitious work, met with a warmer reception, though its length was criticised. Of the occasion of *Crusoé* Albert Vizentini, later to be

Offenbach's manager at the Théâtre de la Gaîté, wrote: 'The author of *Le Mariage aux lanternes* wanted to wear the robes [livrées] of this house, but they were too big for him.' Length was also to be an issue with *Vert-Vert* two years later, which at a total running time of three hours and 42 minutes seemed out of proportion with its subject matter.

The origins of *Vert-Vert* are an 1832 comedy-vaudeville by Adolphe de Leuven and Philippe Pittaud de Forges about a dead parrot, which itself had been inspired by an 18th-century poem by Louis Gresset. The libretto for Offenbach's *opéra-comique* included text by no fewer than five authors: Meilhac, Nuitter, Leuven, Halévy and Pittaud de Forges. As with *Barkouf*, its libretto was potentially controversial for the high-minded audience of the Salle Favart.

Vert-Vert achieved more success than its two predecessors, in spite of a few harsh reactions, such as that of *L'Art musical*: 'The parrot has been no more fortunate than the dog at the Salle Favart. The author of *Orphée*, of *La Belle Hélène* would do well to give up on a theatre that his buffo genre does not allow him to reach. He would do well to not risk himself on this stage that the old masters have lit up since Grétry and Auber. The day that one goes from the dance hall to the salon, one is gauche, awkward, ill at ease; one feels out of place.'

Allusions were made elsewhere to *Vert-Vert*'s vaudeville origins, but many of its musical numbers were highly praised and, overall, the reviews were kind enough to allow it to notch up 54 performances in 1869 – a considerable improvement on the seven and 32 achieved respectively by *Barkouf* and *Crusoé*. *Vert-Vert* proved a personal triumph for the young tenor Victor Capoul as Valentin/Vert-Vert, performing his first major role, and who was much admired by the female portion of the audience for his good looks. His arias were among the evening's most notable successes. Two of them are included on this recording: his lament for the dead parrot from Act I and the Barcarolle from Act II (see page 74).

Mimi, Bathilde and Emma, three pupils in a girls' boarding school, are burying their dead parrot Vert-Vert with the help of the headmistress Mlle Paturel, her nephew Valentin, and the gardener Binet. From now on, Valentin will be known as Vert-Vert and will receive the same preferential treatment as the parrot.

VALENTIN

Il était beau, brillant, leste et volage,
Aimable et franc comme on l'est au bel âge,
Et tendre et vif, mais encore innocent,
Par son caquet digne d'être au couvent.
Il bavardait, mais avec modestie,
Il n'était point d'agréable partie
S'il n'y venait briller, caracolier,
Papillonner, siffler, rossignoler.
Par plusieurs voix interrogé sans cesse,
Il répondait à tous avec justesse,
Tel autrefois César, en même temps,
Dictait à quatre en styles différents.
Adieu Vert-Vert, pleurez, pleurez mes soeurs.
Ci-git Vert-Vert, ci-gisent tous les coeurs.

He was beautiful, brilliant, wanton and fickle,
lovable and artless as one is at that age,
tender and lively, but still innocent,
his language not unworthy of the convent.
He chattered, but with modesty.
No party was complete
without him there to scintillate and caper,
flutter, whistle and chirrup.
Quizzed incessantly by several people,
he would reply to each correctly,
just as Ceasar, long ago, simultaneously
dictated to four people in different styles.
Farewell, Vert-Vert, weep, weep, my sisters.
Here lies Vert-Vert, here lie all our hearts.

Adieu Vert-Vert,
Pleurez mes soeurs!

Farewell, Vert-Vert,
weep my sisters!

MIMI, BATHILDE, EMMA, CHORUS

Adieu Vert-Vert,
Pleurons mes soeurs.
Ci-git Vert-Vert,
Ci-gisent tous les coeurs.
Adieu Vert-Vert
Pleurez mes soeurs!

Farewell Vert-Vert,
weep my sisters.
Here lies Vert-Vert,
here lie all hearts.
Farewell Vert-Vert,
weep my sisters.

VALENTIN

Ah! que de soins, que d'attentions fines,
Colifichets, biscuits, bonbons, pralines,
L'heureux Vert-Vert se bourrait chaque jours,
Plus mitonné qu'un perroquet de cour.
Mais de nos soeurs, ô largesse indiscreète,
Du sein des Maux d'une longue diète,
Passant trop tôt dans les flots de douceurs,
Bourré de sucre et brûlé de liqueurs.
Vert-Vert tombant sur un lit de dragées,
En noirs cyprès vit ses roses changées.
En vain vos soins tachaient de retenir
Son âme errante et son dernier soupir.
Adieu Vert-Vert, pleurez, pleurez mes soeurs, etc.

Oh! what care he had, what delicate attentions,
what bird-cake, biscuits, sweets and chocolates
an appreciative Vert-Vert scoffed every day,
more pampered than a parrot in a palace.
But, as our sisters spoilt him most unwisely,
from the abstemiousness of meagre rations
he passed too soon to overindulgence in sweets,
was stuffed with sugar and strong drink.
Vert-Vert, by falling into a bed of dragées,
saw roses transformed into sombre cypresses.
In vain your nursing sought to keep a hold
on his departing soul and final gasp.
Farewell, Vert-Vert, weep, weep my sisters, etc.

MIMI, BATHILDE, EMMA, CHORUS

Adieu Vert-Vert, etc.

Farewell, Vert-Vert, etc.

[11] *Les Deux Pêcheurs* ou *Le Lever du soleil*

Bouffonnerie musicale in one act

Libretto by Charles-Désiré Dupeuty and Ernest Bourget

First performance: 13 November 1857

Théâtre des Bouffes-Parisiens, Paris

Ballade, 'Castilbêta'

Polissard...Loïc Félix Gros-Minet...Mark Stone

Composed for the Bouffes-Parisiens in 1857, *Les Deux Pêcheurs* (The Two Fishermen) is a *bouffonnerie musicale* closely modelled on a previous Offenbach hit, *Les Deux Aveugles*, first given on the Bouffes' opening night, two years previously. Written for just two characters, it consists of an introduction and five short musical numbers interspersed with slapstick dialogue, during which many misunderstandings and comical events occur. *Les Deux Pêcheurs* did not enjoy the success of its predecessor and had to be cut and re-worked.

The piece is very obviously 'early Bouffes-Parisiens' in its musical style; Polissard's nonsense ballad is written in the style of a popular song of the period. At this point in his career, a year before *Orphée aux Enfers*,

Offenbach had not yet completely secured his place in Parisian musical and theatrical life. With *Les Deux Pêcheurs* having made a limited impression on the public, his next move to entice an audience was to give a French re-working of Rossini's *Il Signor Bruschino* (under the title *Don Bruschino*). That helped to re-establish some of the musical kudos his company had gained when he had incorporated Mozart's *Der Schauspieldirektor* into their programme some 18 months previously.

Polissard and Gros-Minet are fishing on an island on the Marne, at Charenton, where Polissard is to marry Gros-Minet's cousin. They entertain themselves by singing nonsense ballads: first, Gros-Minet with a song about a frog; and, in this extract, Polissard with his tale of Castilbêta the fisherman.

POLISSARD

Castilbêta, le pêcheur à la ligne,
Chantait ainsi:
Ça ne mord pas et mon Alexandrine,
Elle s'est enfuie.
J'ai, pour chasser le chagrin qui me gagne,
Bu comme un trou!
Le vin qui mousse à travers la Champagne
Me rendra fou!

Castilbêta, the angler,
sang thus:
Nothing is biting and my Alexandrine
has run away.
In order to drive away my mounting grief
I drank like a fish!
The wine which foams across Champagne
will drive me mad!

GROS-MINET

Bom di di bom, l'a rendu fou! *etc.*

Bom di di bom, has driven him mad! *etc.*

POLISSARD

Bom di di bom, m'a rendu fou! *etc.*

Bom di di bom, has driven me mad! *etc.*

POLISSARD

Vrai, la Géante auprès d'elle n'était guère
Que d' la Saint-Jean;
On la montrait à la fête d'Asnière
Pour de l'argent;
Elle relevait sa dentelle d'Allemagne
Jusqu'au genou!
Le vin qui mousse à travers la Champagne
Me rendra fou!

True, the giantess, compared with her,
was nothing;
we showed her off at the Asnière Fête
for money;
she lifted her German lace
up to her knee!
The wine which foams across Champagne
will drive me mad!

GROS-MINET

Bom di di bom..., l'a rendu fou!

Bom di di bom... has driven him mad!

POLISSARD

... m'a rendu fou!

... has driven me mad!

POLISSARD

Pleurez, pleurez : ma tendre Alexandrine,
Un beau matin,
Me vola tout, mes hameçons et ma ligne
Jusqu'à mon crin,

Weep, weep: my tender Alexandrine
one fair morning
stole everything I had, my fish-hooks, my rod,
even the line itself;

Et pour aller faire une partie d'campagne
Mit tout au clou!
Le vin qui mousse à travers la Champagne
Me rendra fou!

and to pay for a jaunt in the country
she pawned the lot!
The wine which foams across Champagne
will drive me mad!

GROS-MINET

Bom di di bom ... , l'a rendu fou!

Bom di di bom... has driven him mad!

POLISSARD

...m'a rendu fou!

...has driven me mad!

[12] *La Créole*

Opéra-comique in three acts

Libretto by Albert Millaud

First performance: 3 November 1875

Théâtre des Bouffes-Parisiens, Paris

'J'avais bien vu'

Antoinette ... Yvonne Kenny

La Créole opened at the Bouffes-Parisiens on 3 November 1875, less than a month after the two other important Offenbach pieces of 1875: *La Boulangère a des écus* (at the Variétés) and *Le Voyage dans la lune* (Gaîté). Unlike the troubled *Boulangère* (see page 52), Offenbach wrote *La Créole* very quickly. The libretto was apparently by Albert Millaud, but Meilhac and Halévy contributed some work anonymously, claiming a share of the rights.

Like its predecessor *La Jolie Parfumeuse* (see page 4), *La Créole* seeks to please a bourgeois audience with an operetta style that is elegant and amusing rather than buffo. However, unlike *La Jolie Parfumeuse*, it did not enjoy a critical success. Henry James wrote disparagingly of *La Créole* in his chronicles for the *New York Tribune*, and *L'Art musical* damned it thus: 'The first [act] languishes, the third strikes even those uninitiated in the world of theatre by its complete uselessness. After the well-made if unoriginal second act, the third would be unbearable without the artists' talent.' It concluded: 'This musician has produced a great deal, worked enormously and has certainly written charming little gems in his chosen genre. But why has he not, having reached such an unwished-for reputation, sought to concentrate his talents and leave one or two really viable works?' With his gout worsening, Offenbach did indeed slow down his rate of composition, devoting an unprecedented three years to the creation of *Les Contes d'Hoffmann*.

La Créole contains interesting references to French colonialism. The title character, Dora, is essentially a trophy brought back to France by the Commander after his posting in Guadeloupe. The fascination with a beautiful exotic woman had been the principal theme of two operas staged shortly before *La Créole*, both of them known to Offenbach: Meyerbeer's *L'Africaine* (1865) and Verdi's *Aïda* (1871). The text of Dora's beautiful 'Berceuse' (see page 60, CD2 track 12) may seem politically incorrect today; but its depiction of love and happiness in a far-off land, its rich vocal writing, and rocking sea-accompaniment, were clearly intended to enchant its 19th-century Parisian audience. By contrast with the exoticism of the 'Berceuse', Antoinette's Couplets, heard here, show Offenbach very much at home in his own lyrical style, reminiscent of Elsbeth in *Fantasio* and Antonia in *Hoffmann*. Here, the magical pizzicato strings emphasise the girl's fast-beating heart, the caressing woodwind her tenderness and fragility.

The opera is set in 1685, opening in the mansion of Commander Adhémar de Feuillermort in La Rochelle.

The Commander wants to marry his ward Antoinette to his nephew René, a musketeer.

But Antoinette is in love with Frontignac, and shyly makes her declaration to him.

ANTOINETTE

J'avais bien vu votre tendresse,
Que vous m'aimiez avec ivresse.
Quoique vous ne me disiez rien,
Mon ami, je le savais bien.
Et, tout bas, je me disais même
Que je suis heureuse qu'il m'aime.
Ne me regardez ainsi!
Monsieur, si je vous dis ceci
C'est pour vous donner du courage,
Mais pas davantage.
Comment, après ma confiance,
Vous me montrez plus d'exigence?
Vous voulez que je fasse mieux?
Eh bien soit! Lisez dans mes yeux.
Puisqu'il le faut, lisez-y même,
Lisez-y, tout bas, qu'on vous aime
Ne me pressez pas ainsi!
Monsieur, si je vous dis ceci,
C'est pour vous donner du courage,
Mais pas davantage.

I saw indeed from your tenderness,
that you loved me madly.
Although you said nothing to me,
my friend, I knew it well.
And I said very softly to myself,
I am happy that he loves me.
Don't look at me like that!
Sir, by saying this
I mean to give you confidence,
but nothing more.
After my confession, how is it
that you become more demanding?
You want me to do even more?
So be it! Look into my eyes.
As I cannot deny it, read what is there
Read, silently, that you are loved.
Do not press me so!
Sir, by saying this
I mean to give you confidence,
but nothing more.

[13] *Monsieur et Madame Denis*

Opéra-comique in one act

Libretto by Laurencin (Paul-Aimé Chapelle) and Michel Delaporte

First performance: 11 January 1862

Théâtre des Bouffes-Parisiens, Paris

'La Chaconne'

Lucile de Coudrai ... Laura Claycomb

Geoffrey Mitchell Choir

In the summer of 1861 the Bouffes-Parisiens toured to Vienna, Hungary and Berlin, giving performances of various works, including *Orphée aux Enfers*. These visits were far from entirely successful – indeed, their performance of *Orphée* was considered by one critic to have been inferior to that given by a Viennese company earlier in the same year. During that summer Offenbach was awarded the title of Chevalier de la Légion d'honneur, but the next few months were largely a story of flops and poor box-office takings at the Bouffes.

To compound matters, in December 1861 grievances were expressed against Offenbach at a meeting of the Société des auteurs et compositeurs dramatiques, a society that existed to protect the rights of authors and composers. The Société criticised Offenbach's promotion of his own music in the Bouffes-Parisiens' programming, in spite of the fact that he had been director of the company since its inception in 1855. The Société decreed that for every one-act work by Offenbach, a one-act piece by another composer should be performed. Offenbach decided that this was the moment to give up the directorship of his company, and in January 1862 handed over the management to his musical director, Alphonse Varney. Offenbach's duties were now exclusively as a composer.

In January 1862 a new Offenbach one-act *opéra-comique*, *Monsieur et Madame Denis*, provided the Bouffes with the box-office success they needed. At the premiere, one of the principal performers, Potel, made reference to the music as being by 'Maestro Offenbach'. The critic of *Le Figaro*, M. Cardon, wrote in disgust: 'Maestro Rossini, yes; Maestro Offenbach, never.' Offenbach replied in print: 'M. Cardon, learn that Maestro is an Italian term which applies to all composers from the greatest to the most modest, just as Monsieur is used for everybody, as much that one says M. Jules Janin [another critic] as M. Cardon.' The most popular number of *Monsieur et Madame Denis* was the Chaconne recorded here, which was encored at the first performance.

Gaston, ward of Monsieur and Madame Denis, hopes to marry Lucile, his guardians' niece. Having abducted Lucile from boarding school, he seeks his guardians' blessing on the marriage, but, upon arriving at their home, finds them absent. By this time the abduction has been discovered and soldiers arrive at the house to arrest the two young people.

Gaston and Lucile attempt to pass themselves off as Monsieur and Madame Denis, but without success; however, Nanette the maid gives the soldiers wine to make them drunk and Lucile sings a Chaconne, which sends them to sleep.

The curtain falls just as the real Monsieur and Madame Denis arrive home.

LUCILE DE COUDRAI

Dansons la chaconne.

L'air résonne

De son rythme joyeux.

Allons en cadence

Que l'on danse

Deux à deux.

Cette mélodie

À l'amour nous convie.

Dansons la chaconne.

L'air résonne

De son rythme joyeux.

Allons en cadence

Que l'on danse

Deux à deux.

Let's dance a Chaconne.

The air resounds
with its joyful rhythm.

Let's sway in time to it,
let's dance

two by two.

This melody
invites us to love.

Let's dance a Chaconne.

The air resounds
with its joyful rhythm.

Let's sway,
let's dance,

two by two.

CHORUS

La, la, la.

La, la, la.

[14] *Le Voyage dans la lune*

Opéra-féerie in four acts

Libretto by Albert Vanloo, Eugène Leterrier and Arnold Mortier

First performance: 26 October 1875

Théâtre de la Gaîté, Paris

'Ariette de la Princesse'

Fantasia ... Elizabeth Vidal

Offenbach had initially turned down the librettists Vanloo, Leterrier and Mortier when they suggested a work based on Jules Verne's celebrated novels *De la Terre à la Lune* and *Autour de la Lune*, which had already been given in theatrical adaptations. Offenbach, concerned about the expense of staging such a lavish and demanding work featuring spectacular scenic effects, was not prepared to take the financial risk himself. When Vizentini, manager of the Gaîté theatre, agreed to take the piece on, Offenbach changed his mind and wrote *Le Voyage dans la lune*, an *opéra-féerie* in four acts.

The origins of *opéra-féerie* can be traced back to the works of Rameau and others in the mid-18th century, but the term only came into use in the early 19th century around the time of Martainville's *Le Pied de mouton* (1806). The key characteristics of a *féerie* were plots involving the supernatural, a preponderance of scene changes and stunning visual coups.

The genre was fuelled in the early 1870s by new technological developments in theatres, making possible all kinds of elaborate scenic effects. Offenbach's five works entitled 'féerie' include the second, much-expanded version of *Orphée aux Enfers* (1874) and *Le Roi Carotte* (see page 71). *Le Voyage dans la lune* abounds in visual effects, such as the spaceship taking off, telescopes that transform themselves into chairs, and falling tobacco giving rise to cigar plants.

In spite of a few problems, including accusations of plagiarism by author Jules Verne, *Le Voyage dans la lune* was very popular with the public, who enjoyed its science-fiction elements. Offenbach's mistress Zulma Bouffar played the trouser-role, Prince Caprice, though this had originally been intended for another singer, Marie Aimée. The cast change was chiefly brought about by the success Bouffar had just enjoyed in *La Reine Indigo*, the first Johann Strauss II stage-work to receive a performance in Paris. The everjealous Offenbach now felt he needed to re-establish Bouffar in the public's mind as one of *his* artists, and placed her firmly in the starring role. In the event, it was to be the last role that Bouffar would create for Offenbach and she enjoyed a triumph here also. 'You must see her, you must hear her on her chariot, flanked by her joyful companion, Christian; it's a tableau of such entertaining realism,' wrote Moreno of her appearance in the 'Ronde des charlatans' ('Ohé! Ohé!').

The items chosen for this recording from *Le Voyage dans la lune* show Offenbach at his finest. The delightful coloratura aria of Princess Fantasia is a soprano showpiece, written for Noémie Marcus, an acclaimed young singer making her debut. The two items for Prince Caprice display different sides of Zulma Bouffar's talent: her tender and vulnerable aspect in 'Je regarde vos jolis yeux' (CD2 track 3) and an extrovert display in 'Ohé! Ohé!' (CD2 track 4), its wide leaps showing off her vocal range. The 'Final de la neige' is an Offenbachian sensation – the visual effect of snow falling, combined with the 'shivering' effect of full cast and chorus singing 'Brrrr' was a guaranteed audience hit.

In the first act, Prince Caprice, son of King V'lan IV, demands to visit the Moon. After a spectacular departure from Earth in a special cannon fashioned for the purpose, he lands on the Moon, along with his father and the astrologer Microscope. The Moon is the territory of King Cosmos, married to Queen Popotte, and his court. The Moon-dwellers are hostile to the invaders from Earth, but they find a friend in Cosmos's daughter, the beautiful young Moon-Princess Fantasia. Hitherto, love has been an unknown concept on the Moon – until Fantasia takes a bite out of the apple that Caprice has brought with him from Earth. She now feels decidedly uncomfortable ...

FANTASIA

Je suis nerveuse,
Je suis fiévreuse,
Ma tête bout.
Un rien m'agace,
Tout me tracasse,
Me pousse à bout.
À la même heure,
Je ris, je pleure
Et je voudrais,
Battre quelqu'un,
Si je pouvais.

Je suis nerveuse, *etc.*
Pourtant j'aime ton doux supplice
Ô mal charmant nouveau pour moi.
Je te partage avec Caprice
Et je ne puis plus vivre sans toi.
Je suis nerveuse, *etc.*

I am nervous,
I am feverish,
my head is boiling hot.
Every little thing annoys me,
everything bothers me,
drives me to distraction.
I laugh and cry
both at once,
and I'd like,
to hit someone,
if I could.
I am nervous, *etc.*
And yet I love your sweet torment,
O charming sickness new to me!
I share you with Caprice
and cannot live without you.
I'm nervous, *etc.*

[15] *Le Voyage dans la lune*

'Final de la neige'

Fantasia ... Elizabeth Vidal Caprice ... Jennifer Larmore Popotte ... Alexandra Sherman
Le Prince ... Mark Wilde V'lan ... Mark Stone Cosmos ... Alastair Miles
Geoffrey Mitchell Choir

The invaders from planet Earth, led by King V'lan and his son Caprice, have captured Moon-Princess Fantasia, who is betrothed to the Moon-Prince but now in love with Caprice. Fantasia's father, King Cosmos, has ordered his people to pursue the earthlings. But the Moon-Prince unexpectedly offers to relinquish his claim on Fantasia, meaning the lovers can be united. At the moment of their greatest joy, it begins to snow ...

MICROSCOPE, COSMOS, V'LAN, CHORUS

Courons tous, courons vite.
Ils vont nous échapper.
Courons à leur poursuite,
Il faut les rattraper.

Run, everyone, run quickly.
They are about to escape from us.
Run after them,
we must catch them.

Allons, allons, car il faut les rattraper.
Courons, courons, car il vont nous échapper.

Come on, come on, we must catch them.
Run, run, they are about to get away.

LE PRINCE

Les voici.

Here they are.

MICROSCOPE, COSMOS, V'LAN, CHORUS

Les voici.

Here they are.

LE PRINCE

Tout près d'ici,
On a pu les reprendre.

They were quite close to us,
so we were able to recapture them

V'LAN

Que viens-je d'entendre?

What did you say?

LE PRINCE

Et quant à la princesse
Je n'en veux plus, je vous la laisse.
Reprenez-la, Seigneur,
Je vous l'offre de bien bon coeur.

And as for the princess
I don't want her any more, I leave her to you.
Take her back sir,
I give her to you very happily.

FANTASIA, CAPRICE, POPOTTE

Ah! Nous sommes transis!
Le froid nous a saisis.

Ah! We're frozen to the marrow!
We're chilled to the bone.

CAPRICE

Pauvre Fantasia!

Poor Fantasia!

COSMOS

Chère Popotte, te voilà!

Dear Popotte, there you are!

CAPRICE, FANTASIA

Il neige! Il neige!
Bon! La neige à présent!

It's snowing! It's snowing!
Great! It's snowing now!

THE OTHERS

La neige, la neige!
La neige à présent!

Snow, snow!
It's snowing now!

V'LAN

La neige à présent.
Quel pays étonnant :
On était au tropique,
On se trouve en Norvège.

It's snowing now.
What an extraordinary country:
We were in the tropics,
now we find ourselves in Norway.

ALL

Il neige! Il neige!
Partons promptement.

It's snowing! It's snowing!
Let's leave at once

CAPRICE, THEN ALL

Il neige! Il neige!
Nous grelottons, nous grelottons!

It's snowing! It's snowing!
We're shivering, we're shivering!

La neige, la neige
Tombe à flocons, tombe à flocons.

The snow, the snow
is falling thick and fast, thick and fast.

CAPRICE

La fâcheuse aventure :
Au moment le plus heureux
Voilà que la nature
S'est mise contre nous deux.
Vainement je m'enflamme
Mon coeur est pris par le froid,
Moi je brûle et puis, dame!
Tout se glace autour de moi.
Il fait trop froid! Vraiment il fait par trop froid.

This is most unfortunate:
at the happiest moment,
see how nature
has pitted itself against the two of us.
My passion is kindled in vain,
my heart is gripped by the cold,
I'm all aglow – and then, dammit!
it all freezes up around me.
It's too cold! It really is too cold.

CAPRICE, FANTASIA

Brrrrr!

Brrrrr!

CAPRICE, THEN ALL

Il neige! Il neige! *etc.*

It's snowing! It's snowing! *etc.*

CAPRICE

Doucement je peux prendre
Dans ma main sa chère main.
Elle veut me la tendre,
L'hiver la glace soudain.
Mon amour s'effarouche
Et s'envole avec effroi.
Les baisers sur ma bouche
Sont gelés, ah! Non, ma foi!
Il fait trop froid! Vraiment il fait par trop froid.

Very gently I can take
her dear hand into mine.
She would stretch it out to me,
but the winter suddenly freezes it.
My love takes fright
and flees in terror.
The kisses on my lips
are frozen, ah! No, by heck!
It's too cold! It really is too cold.

CAPRICE, FANTASIA

Brrrrr!

Brrrrr!

CAPRICE, THEN ALL

Il neige! Il neige! *etc.*

It's snowing! It's snowing! *etc.*

COSMOS

Allons, partons sans plus attendre,
Il s'agit de nous en aller.

Come on, let's be off without further ado,
we've got to get out of here.

ALL

Il s'agit de nous en aller.

We've got to get out of here.

COSMOS

Vite, au palais il faut nous rendre
Si nous voulons ne pas geler.

We've got to get to the palace quickly
unless we want to freeze.

ALL

Si nous voulons ne pas geler.

Unless we want to freeze.

Brrr!

Il neige! Il neige! *etc.*

Brrr!

It's snowing! It's snowing! *etc.*

[16] *Belle Lurette*¹

Opéra-comique in three acts

Libretto by Ernest Blum, Édouard Blau and Raoul Toché

First performance: 30 October 1880

Théâtre de la Renaissance, Paris

'Ce fut à Londres'

Marceline ... Yvonne Kenny Malicorne ... Loïc Félix

Offenbach began writing his masterpiece, *Les Contes d'Hoffmann*, in 1877 with the intention of leaving something to posterity. He devoted to it far more time and care than had been his wont with previous works. Nevertheless, he broke off from his work on *Hoffmann* to compose two lighter pieces: *La Fille du tambour-major* and *Belle Lurette*. His chief motive in writing *Belle Lurette* was to score a victory over his rival Charles Lecocq, who had recently become the only composer to have his music performed in the Théâtre de la Renaissance. Offenbach's international success with *La Fille du tambour-major* prompted a commission from the Renaissance, which he could not resist accepting, thus displacing his rival's monopoly of that theatre.

By mid-1880, when he was writing *Belle Lurette*, Offenbach's gout had reached a point where it was clear he had very little time left to live. He spent the summer working on *Hoffmann* and *Belle Lurette* at Saint-Germain-en-Laye. In early August 1880, he wrote to his daughter Pépita. In the course of a saddening account of his daily health, he told her: 'I have just a month to write the third act of *Belle Lurette*, orchestrate the three acts, and compose the finale and whole fifth act of *Les Contes d'Hoffmann* (I am not even talking of the orchestration which will come later), and I have to write the other one-acter for the Variétés. Will I make it? Let's hope so.' He died on 5 October 1880, leaving all three works incomplete.

The frustration of musicians and scholars who have attempted to reconstruct Offenbach's wishes for *Hoffmann* has caused some writers to comment harshly about the composer dissipating his energy in writing two essentially frivolous works when he might have concentrated solely on the important one. However, writing several pieces at once had been his habit for most of his career, and *Lurette* itself contains several moments of winning Offenbachian generosity and panache which could never have found a place in a 'serious' work. He was not one to suppress ideas, and the variety of working on a number of scores concurrently may well have been a key element in his creative process.

Offenbach's funeral on 7 October 1880 was a major public event. The long procession through the streets of Paris gave many the chance to pay their final respects; Hortense Schneider followed the cortege on foot for its entire journey. *Belle Lurette* was completed by Léo Delibes, who also took over its rehearsals, a testimony to his strong friendship with Offenbach. *Lurette* opened on 30 October 1880 and enjoyed a healthy run. The critics were generally kind and praised several numbers highly, not least the delightful duet for

¹ 'Belle Lurette', the title of the opera and the name of the main character, is based on word-play. 'Il y a belle lurette', with *lurette* uncapitalised, means 'years ago'. Capitalised, *Lurette* is a name constructed on the pattern of many French names, such as Colette, Lucette, etc.

Marceline and Malicorne paraphrasing Johann Strauss II's *Blue Danube* waltz. This is a kind of homage to a composer Offenbach held in the highest regard and whom he had encouraged to write operettas; the result was several celebrated works, including *Die Fledermaus*.

The 'Ronde et ensemble' (see page 79), finds Offenbach at the end of his career in barnstorming form – a deliciously rustic number, complete with slangy text and shrieking chorus. *Les Contes d'Hoffmann* may represent the *ne plus ultra* of Offenbach's lyrical style, but here he gives us the very best of his charm and pizzazz in a real operetta showpiece.

The opera is set in the era of Louis XV. The young Duc de Marly has to marry before his 21st birthday in order to keep his inheritance. He now has just one day left to find a bride. His valet, Malicorne, discovers the beautiful

Lurette, who works in a laundry run by Marceline.

In this excerpt, Malicorne tells Marceline how his parents met and of his birth by the Danube.

MALICORNE

Ce fut à Londres que mon père
De ma mère obtint un regard.
À Copenhague, encor sévère,
Elle s'attendrit à Stuttgart.
Ce qu'entendit la Forêt Noire,
Nul ne le sait exactement ;
Mais le Danube eut cette gloire
De contempler le dénouement.
C'est le Danube, le beau Danube bleu.
Oui.
Les flots d'azur
Qui les bercèrent
Furent témoins
D'un doux aveu.
Et mes parents se fiancèrent
Auprès du beau Danube bleu.

It was in London that my father
secured a glance from my mother.
In Copenhagen, she was still resisting,
but finally softened in Stuttgart.
What the Black Forest heard
no-one knows precisely;
but the Danube had the honour
of witnessing the dénouement.
The Danube, the beautiful blue Danube.
Yes.
The azure waves
that cradled them
witnessed
their sweet avowals.
And my parents became betrothed
by the beautiful blue Danube.

MARCELINE

(imitant la guitare) Bing bing bing bing.
Et ses parents se fiancèrent
Auprès du beau Danube bleu.

(imitating a guitar) Bing bing bing bing.
And his parents became betrothed
by the beautiful blue Danube.

MALICORNE, MARCELINE

La la la la, bing, bing, bing, bing.

La la la la, bing, bing, bing, bing.

MALICORNE

Après des mois de course errante
Un soir près de la « Urne d'or »
Ma bonne mère, un peu souffrante,
Voulut revoir la France encor.

After months of wandering,
one evening, near the Golden Urn,
my dear mother, in a little pain,
wished to see France again.

On se hâtait, croyant sans doute,
Toucher à temps le sol français,
Mais un fleuve barre la route.
Au même instant je vagissais,
Au même instant je vagissais.
Hasard étrange,
Ô doux mystère
Qui me faisait that
Naître en ce lieu.
C'était le fleuve de ma mère,
C'était le beau Danube bleu.

They hurried, no doubt believing
they'd reach French soil in time,
but a river barred their way.
Just then I uttered my first cry.
Oui. Just then I uttered my first cry. Yes.
Strange coincidence,
O sweet mystery
caused me to be born
in that very place.
It was the river so dear to my mother,
the beautiful blue Danube.

MARCELINE

(imitant la guitare) Bing bing bing bing.
C'était le fleuve de sa mère,
C'était le beau Danube bleu.

(imitating a guitar) Bing bing bing bing.
The river so dear to his mother,
the beautiful blue Danube.

MALICORNE, MARCELINE

La la la la, bing, bing, bing, bing.

La la la la, bing, bing, bing, bing.

[17] *Belle Lurette*

'Belle Lurette a des beaux yeux'

Campistrel ... André Cagnet Belle Lurette ... Elizabeth Vidal

Geoffrey Mitchell Choir

Before the Duc de Marly arrived on the scene, the beautiful Lurette had already rejected several admirers.

One of these suitors was the love-lorn Campistrel, who describes the kind of woman she is...

CAMPISTREL

Je n'aime pas à faire des façons,
Mais vous savez combien m'impressionne
un public trop nombreux.

I don't like to make a fuss,
but you know how I am affected
by too big an audience.

BELLE LURETTE

Ne nous regardez pas.

Don't look at us.

CAMPISTREL

Ma foi, l'idée est bonne,
Vous allez voir quel est le creux de profundo Campistrel,
Quand il le donne.

By heavens, what a good idea!
You'll hear what Campistrel's basso is like
When he opens his mouth.

CAMPISTREL

1er couplet

Belle Lurette a des beaux yeux,
Le bras dodu, la jambe fine,
En elle tout est gracieux,

1st couplet

Lovely Lurette has beautiful eyes
plump arms, slender legs,
everything about her is graceful,

Ce qu'on voit, ce qu'on devine.
J'en ai connu plus d'un jurant
Être toujours indifférent à la coquette;
Elle sourit, elle a parlé
Et le serment s'est envolé
Y a bell' lurette.

Elle sourit, elle a parlé
Et le serment s'est envolé
Y a bell' lurette.

2eme couplet

Belle Lurette a-t-elle un coeur?
Personne n'en sait de nouvelle.
Il est comme un oiseau moqueur
Dont on ne peut couper les ailes.
Parfois, croyant qu'on le séduit,
On veut lui peindre c' qui nous remplit
Le coeur et la tête.
On n'a pas dit les premiers mots
Qu'elle nous a tourné le dos.
Y a bell' lurette.

On n'a pas dit les premiers mots
Qu'elle nous a tourné le dos
Y a bell' lurette.

what one can see, what one can imagine.
I've known more than one man swear
that he was indifferent to coquettes;
but she smiled, she spoke,
and his vows vanished into thin air,
Long ago.

CHORUS

She smiled, she spoke
and his vows vanished into thin air.
Long ago.

CAMPISTREL

2nd couplet

Does Lovely Lurette have a heart?
No-one knows.
It is like a mockingbird
whose wings you cannot clip.
Sometimes, thinking you have won her favours,
you want to describe the emotions
filling your heart and head.
But before you can utter a word,
she has turned her back on you.
Long ago.

CHORUS

But before you can utter a word
she has turned her back on you.
Long ago.

[18] *La Diva*

Opéra-bouffe in three acts

Libretto by Henri Meilhac and Ludovic Halévy

First performance: 22 March 1869

Théâtre des Bouffes-Parisiens, Paris

'L'air, disait-il'

Jeanne ... Diana Montague

Le Diva was created in 1869 as a vehicle for and celebration of Hortense Schneider (1833–1920), who had created the leading roles in Offenbach's *La Belle Hélène*, *Barbe-Bleue*, *La Grande-Duchesse de Gérolstein* and *La Périchole*.

Schneider came from a lowly background in Bordeaux, where she had worked in a shop, longing to perform in the theatre. Having gained experience as a performer in theatre, opera and vaudeville, she was introduced to Offenbach in 1855, aged 21, by her then-lover Jean Berthelier, who was playing one of the blind

beggars in *Les Deux Aveugles*. Offenbach auditioned her and engaged her immediately. She first appeared for him in *Le Violoneux* (1855), but her demands for more money ruled out her chances of being cast in the first *Orphée aux Enfers* in 1858.

In 1864, she needed some persuading to accept the title role of *La Belle Hélène*, making one of her regular protestations of giving up the theatre. But that work made her a star. She continued to be temperamental and walked out on a number of theatre managements, usually over money. Her many lovers and royal admirers, about whom she made no secret, provided a constant source of notoriety and kept her in the public eye when she was not performing. One of her rivals, the singer Léa Silly, famously dubbed Schneider's Paris residence 'le Passage des Princes'. But she was apparently a captivating performer on stage and celebrated, in particular, for her interpretation of intimate moments, such as the letter-reading scene in *La Périochole*.

La Diva, first seen in 1869, took Schneider's own life story as the basis of its plot. She herself was to be brought out of one of her several self-imposed retirements as its star, calculated to be the box-office event of the season. The story showed her lowly beginnings as a grisette and subsequent rise to fame, even politely alluding to her real-life love affairs. She is depicted as both witty and profound, permanently surrounded by adoring admirers and fellow colleagues, eager to entertain others, yet often unhappy in her own life.

The premiere took place just 12 days after that of *Vert-Vert* at the Opéra-Comique, Offenbach, as often, dominating several Parisian theatres at the same time. As a calculated barb to Schneider, one of her disgruntled former employers, Hippolyte Cogniard, director of the Théâtre des Variétés, put on a revival of *Barbe-Bleue* (a Schneider vehicle), opening three weeks before *La Diva*. The production starred Hortense Schneider's rival Marie Aimée, who was fêted by Schneider's enemies and detractors. In the event, *La Diva* did not draw the hoped-for crowds, and, though it notched up 64 performances, only the first 15 were well attended. Meilhac and Halévy's libretto, peppered with quotations from *La Belle Hélène* and *La Grande-Duchesse*, was an 'occasional' work not intended for posterity that drew harsh words from the writer Barbey d'Aurevilly: 'The same old jokes, the same stupid laughter, the same old public! In this *Diva*, which is not divine, they all plagiarise themselves.'

La Diva was never intended as a work for posterity but is nevertheless worth plundering for the extracts recorded here, including the yodelling German colonels and the memorable second act finale, which features a *Dame aux Camélias/Traviata* scenario, in which Malaga, entertaining guests at a brilliant party has her lover dragged from her arms by an outraged uncle. And the chemistry-lesson aria about suicide from Act I, heard first, was clearly designed to bring a tear to the eyes of Schneider's adoring fans.

Jeanne is one of a group of young female shop-workers living in an attic. Just as she is on the point of escaping from this life by getting married, she receives a letter telling her that her fiancé has changed his mind.

In despair, she contemplates suicide.

JEANNE

1er couplet

L'air, disait-il, est composé
D'oxygène et surtout d'azote
Trois quarts de l'un, prenez en note,
Un quart de l'autre, c'est aisé.

1st couplet

The air, they say, is composed
of oxygen and above all of nitrogen;
three quarters of one, make a note of that,
one quarter of the other, that's easy.

On y peut aussi constater
Un peu d'acide carbonique,
Mais en quantité si modique
Qu'il vaut mieux ne pas en parler.

Refrain

Va-t-en donc, ô jeune ouvrière
Qui veux guérir du mal d'amour,
Va-t-en donc chez la charbonnière
Il y en a une au fond d'la cour.

2eme couplet

Si vous allumez un fourneau,
L'air devient pauvre en oxygène.
Au bout d'un instant, ça vous gêne.
Ça vous prend d'abord au cerveau,
Puis vient la mort ; elle est surtout
Due à l'oxide de carbone
Dont l'influence n'est pas bonne,
Oh! mais là, pas bonne du tout.

Refrain

Va-t-en donc, ô jeune ouvrière, etc.

One can also detect
a little carbonic acid,
but in such a modest quantity
that it's hardly worth mentioning.

Refrain

Go then, young factory girl
who would be cured of the pain of love,
go to the coal-shed
at the bottom of the yard.

2nd couplet

If you light a stove
the oxygen in the air becomes depleted.
Very soon you feel uncomfortable.
It affects your brain first,
then death will come, mostly
due to carbon monoxide,
the effect of which is not healthy,
oh, not healthy at all!

Refrain

Go then, young factory girl, etc.

[19] *La Diva*

'Tu la connais'

1st Colonel ... Colin Lee 2nd Colonel ... Mark Wilde

*Jeanne, the grisette from Act I, has gone on to become a famous diva on the Parisian stage,
going by the name of Malaga. Her talents and charisma have attracted a legion of fans from far and wide,
including these two yodelling colonels from Germany ...*

THE TWO COLONELS

Tu la connais ma douce maîtresse,
La blonde Lischen.
Tu la connais ma noble princesse,
L'altière Gretchen.
Ô Vaterland, Ô Liebesland!
Ô Vaterland, Ô Liebesland,
Sois bien sûr que moi je sacrifierais
La blonde Lischen,
Sois bien sûr aussi que je donnerais
L'altière Gretchen.
Nous donnerions tout,
Même l'Allemagne,

You know my sweet mistress,
the blonde Lischen.
You know my noble princess,
the haughty Gretchen.
O Fatherland, O beloved land!
O Fatherland, O beloved land,
I assure you that I would sacrifice
blonde Lischen,
I also assure you that I would give up
haughty Gretchen.
We would give anything,
even Germany itself,

Pour aller ce soir
Boire du Champagne avec Malaga.
Tra la la la, la ou la ou la bing, tra la la.
Elle a des yeux qui vous prennent l'âme
La douce Lischen,
Elle a des yeux tout remplis de flamme
L'altière Gretchen.
Ô Vaterland, Ô Liebesland,
Ô Vaterland, Ô Liebesland,
Elles ont du charme, elles ont du coeur,
Lisichen et Gretchen,
Mais elles n'ont pas cet attrait vainqueur
Gretchen et Lisichen.
Nous donnerions tout,
Même l'Allemagne,
Pour aller ce soir
Boire du Champagne avec Malaga.
Tra la la la, la ou la ou la bing, tra la la.

to go and drink Champagne
tonight with Malaga.
Tra la la la, la ou la ou la bing, tra la la.
Sweet Lisichen
has eyes which melt your heart,
Haughty Gretchen
has eyes that shoot flame.
O Fatherland, O beloved land,
O Fatherland, O beloved land,
They are charming, they are warmhearted,
Lisichen and Gretchen,
but they are not irresistible
Gretchen and Lisichen.
We would give anything,
even Germany itself,
to go and drink Champagne
tonight with Malaga.
Tra la la la, la ou la ou la bing, tra la la.

[20] *La Diva*

Act II – Finale

Malaga ... Jennifer Larmore Raoul ... Loïc Félix Sosthène ... Alastair Miles Galuchet ... Mark le Brocq
Raphael ... Mark Stone 1st Colonel ... Colin Lee 2nd Colonel ... Mark Wilde

Geoffrey Mitchell Choir

Malaga (formerly known as Jeanne) is enjoying great success in the title role of a production of 'Ariane', surrounded by a supporting cast of friends from her youth. She is giving a party for her colleagues, friends and admirers in her luxurious dressing room. She entertains the assembled company with a song, but the party is interrupted by the arrival of Sosthène, the uncle of her lover, Raoul de La Belle-Jardinière. Sosthène is outraged that his nephew should be mixing in such circles, fearing for the respectability of his family; he succeeds in dragging Raoul away, in spite of the latter's protestations of devotion to Malaga.

CHORUS

Chez nous la vie est si douce, douce, douce, douce
Qu'elle semble un carnaval, carnaval, carnaval.
Versez-nous le vin qui mousse, mousse, mousse
Dans les verres de cristal, de cristal, de cristal.
Buvons, buvons, buvons, buvons.

In our company, life is so sweet, so sweet
it's like one long carnival.
Pour the wine that sparkles, sparkles
into the crystal glasses.
Let's drink, drink, drink.

GALUCHET, RAPHAEL

Maintenant place à la Diva.
Couverte de bravos et de fleurs, la voilà.

Now make way for the diva.
Here she comes, surrounded by bravos and bouquets.

CHORUS

Place à la Diva.
Brava, brava Malaga!

Make way for the diva.
Brava, brava Malaga!

MALAGA

Soyez les bienvenus dans cette humble demeure.
Ce que vous vouliez voir,
Disiez-vous tout à l'heure,
C'est un raout chez Malaga.
Vous vouliez le voir, le voilà.

Welcome to this humble abode.
What you wanted,
you said just now,
was a party at Malaga's.
You wanted it, you've got it!

ALL

Vous vouliez le voir, le voilà.

We wanted it, we've got it!

THE TWO COLONELS

Nous vous supplions à genoux
De vouloir bien chanter quelque chose pour nous.

We beg you on our knees
to kindly agree to sing for us.

MALAGA

Cela vous plaît, je le veux bien.
Aux nobles étrangers, on ne refuse rien.
(*parlé*) Les trois petits hommes
et les trois petites femmes.
Histoire vraie.

If you wish, it is of course my pleasure.
I never refuse a noble stranger.
(*spoken*) The three little men
and the three little women.
True story.

MALAGA

Trois petits homm' ont rencontré
Trois petit' femm' qui s'en allaient.
Les trois p'tits homm' ont déclaré
Aux trois p'tit' femm' qu'ils les aimaient.
Les trois p'tits homm' ont ajouté
Qu'ils donneraient de fortes sommes.
Les trois p'tit' femm's ont riposté
Qu'elles n'aimaient pas les p'tits hommes.
Et ric et rac, et ric et rac
Les trois p'tits homm' avaient le sac.
Et ric à ric, et ric à ric,
Les trois p'tit' femm' avaient du chic!

Three little men met
three little women out walking.
The three little men told
the three little women they loved them.
The three little men added
that they would give them lots of money.
The three little women replied
that they did not love the little men.
And ric-a-rac, and ric-a-rac
the three little men had money.
And ric-a-ric, and ric-a-ric,
the three little women had style!

CHORUS

Et ric et rac, et ric et rac,
Les trois p'tits homm' avaient le sac, *etc.*

And ric-a-rac, and ric-a-rac,
the three little men had money, *etc.*

MALAGA

Les trois p'tit' femm', une heure après,
Ont retrouvé les trois p'tits hommes.
Comme elles éprouvaient du regret

The three little women, one hour later,
found the three little men again.
Because they had come to regret

D'avoir refusé les gross' sommes,
Après eux elles ont couru
Offrant de partager leur flamme.
Mais les p'tits homm, ont répondu
Qu'ils n'aimaient plus les petit' femmes.
Et ric et rac, et ric et rac,
Les trois p'tits homm' avaient le sac!
Et ric à ric, et ric à ric
Les trois p'tit' femm' avaient du chic!

turning down all that money,
they'd run after them
offering to share their ardour.
But the little men responded
that they no longer loved the little women.
And ric-a-rac, and ric-a-rac,
the three little men had money.
And ric-a-ric, and ric-a-ric
the three little women had style!

CHORUS

Et ric et rac, et ric et rac,
Les trois p'tits homm' avaient le sac, *etc.*

And ric-a-rac, and ric-a-rac,
the three little men had money, *etc.*

SOSTHÈNE

Je suis son oncle
Et je viens, comme je vous l'avais promis,
Vous redemander le jeune homme
Que vous nous avez pris.

I am his uncle
and I've come as I promised you
to ask you again for the young man
you took away from us.

CHORUS

Et quoi? c'est l'oncle du jeune homme?

What? Is he the young man's uncle?

SOSTHÈNE

Mon neveu, soyez honnête homme.
On nous attend au faubourg Saint-Germain.

My nephew, be a gentleman.
We are expected in Saint-Germain.

RAOUL

Pas aujourd'hui, mon oncle.
Attendez à demain.

Not today, uncle.
Wait until tomorrow.

SOSTHÈNE

Viens avec moi.

Come with me.

MALAGA

Reste avec nous.

Stay with us.

RAOUL

Mon Dieu, que faire?

My God, what shall I do?

GALUCHET, THE TWO COLONELS, CHORUS

Que va-t-il faire?

What will he do?

SOSTHÈNE

Viens, viens, viens, viens.

Come, come, come, come.

CHORUS

Reste, reste, reste, reste.

Stay, stay, stay, stay.

Reste, reste avec nous.

Stay, stay with us.

MALAGA

Entends, Raoul.

Listen, Raoul.

Entends la voix qui te fut chère.
Raoul, si ton oncle t'emmène,
Où crois-tu, loin de nous, Raoul,
Retrouver ce sans-gêne
Qui te semblait si doux,
Ce laisser-aller plein de grâce,
Cet abandon charmant
Et ce plaisir qu'on trouve en masse
Dans le monde galant.

Listen to the voice you once held dear.
Raoul, if your uncle takes you away,
where, do you think, far from us
will you find the informality
that seemed to you so sweet,
the free-and-easy lifestyle with all its charm,
the alluring sensuality,
and the pleasure readily available,
in bohemian society.

SOSTHÈNE

(à Raoul) Dans notre monde, mon enfant,
On t'en offrira tout autant.

(to Raoul) In our world, my child,
you'll be offered just as much.

MALAGA

Raoul, je ne voudrais pas dire Raoul,
Ce qui ne se dit pas.
Raoul, crois-tu que mon sourire
Tu le retrouveras?
Nos petites façons câlines
Que tu connais si bien
Et surtout, surtout, tu devines
Sans que j'ajoute rien?

I don't want to say
what should remain unsaid.
Raoul, do you think you'll ever
find a smile like mine again?
Our little loving ways,
which you know so well,
and especially, especially... can you guess,
without my saying more?

SOSTHÈNE

(à Raoul) Dans le grand monde, mon enfant,
On t'en offrira tout autant

(to Raoul) In high society, my child,
you'll be offered just as much.

CHORUS & MALAGA

Raoul, Raoul, Raoul.

Raoul, Raoul, Raoul.

RAOUL

Non, mon oncle,
Je ne saurais.
Elle souffrirait trop si je l'abandonnais.

No, uncle,
I couldn't do it.
She'd suffer too much if I left her.

SOSTHÈNE

Brigand, je te déshérite
Tout de suite, tout de suite.
Et puis à la fin, ce n'est pas tout ça.
S'il faut t'emporter on t'emportera.

Wastrel, I disinherit you
here and now, at once.
But when all's said and done there's no problem:
If it means taking you by force, so be it.

RAOUL

Mon oncle, vous me déchirez.

Uncle, you are tearing me apart.

MALAGA

Voyons, voyons, sois donc pas bête.
Voyons, voyons, fais donc pas ta tête.

Come on, come on, don't be silly
come on, come on, don't scowl so.

Et puisque l'on fait la fête,
Fais donc la fête avec nous.

Buvons, buvons.

Chez nous la vie est si douce, douce, douce, douce

Qu'elle semble un carnaval, carnaval, carnaval.

Versez-nous le vin qui mousse, mousse, mousse

Dans les verres de cristal, de cristal, de cristal.

Buvons, buvons, buvons, buvons.

And since we're celebrating,
celebrate with us.

Let's drink, let's drink.

In our company, life is so sweet, so sweet,

it's like one long carnival.

Pour the wine that sparkles, sparkles

into the crystal glasses.

Let's drink, drink, drink.

ALL

Buvons, buvons.

Chez nous la vie est si douce, *etc.*

Let's drink, let's drink.

In our company life is so sweet, *etc.*

CD2

[1] *Les Bergers*

Opéra-comique in three acts

Libretto by Hector Crémieux and Philippe Gille

First performance: 11 December 1865

Théâtre des Bouffes-Parisiens, Paris

'En attendant l'hymen'

La Sincère...Laura Claycomb Nicot...Mark le Brocq Le Menu...Loïc Félix

Offenbach's *La Belle Hélène*, which opened in December 1864, was one of the biggest hits of his career, a parody of the myth of Helen of Troy which itself became the subject of parodies and took on a life of its own. One year later, Offenbach presented the three-act work *Les Bergers*, which represented a new departure for him. Having mocked a Greek myth in *La Belle Hélène*, he now presented a romanticised picture of antiquity, featuring a higher proportion of 'serious' content.

To introduce this new departure to his eager public, he wrote a letter to *Le Figaro*, as he was later to do for the premiere of *Barkouf*, his first work for the Opéra-Comique. In *Les Bergers*, he explained, he intended to write 'a series of pastorales. My score will be a triple masterpiece. In the first first act, we are in pure antiquity; I've treated it as *opera seria*. In the second act, I have bathed in Watteau and made all efforts to recall our 18th-century masters. In the third act, I've sought to portray Courbet in music.' (Gustave Courbet was the painter credited as the founder of realism, on account of his unidealistic portrayals of everyday scenes and his nudes.)

The premiere of *Les Bergers* was delayed twice, firstly because Offenbach had an attack of gout, and secondly because of an accident involving an exploding electric light, which resulted in the death of one of the performers two weeks later. When it did arrive, the premiere was a major event. *L'Événement* reported in December 1865: 'For years now, the announcement of the first performance of a new piece by Offenbach drives people into a frenzy. The members of the Jockey Club brought the time of their dinner forward. Here we find senators, councillors of state, Generals, the élite of the demi-monde.'

Les Bergers generated a broadly positive reception and various numbers were encored. Coming so soon after the major success of *Belle Hélène*, expectations were high. *La Comédie* wrote: 'After *La Belle Hélène* in

particular, it seemed that Offenbach could go no further nor higher. A decisive hour had struck for him, that of putting on something superior to himself in a greater and transfigured talent. From this perilous test, the celebrated composer has come through with glory, and I sincerely believe that we will consider the score of *Bergers* to be his masterpiece.' *La France musicale* wrote: 'The metamorphosis was complete.' *Le Ménestrel* declared it: 'The most beautiful work of M. Offenbach'. However, in *Le Figaro* the critic Jouvin noted: 'No third act has ever been, from introduction to final chord, so completely found wanting, in poem and music.' And *La Semaine musicale* wondered: 'Will it be said that it is impossible for M. Offenbach to be original?'

After an initially positive box-office, *Les Bergers* flopped, and *Belle Hélène* continued to be hailed as 'the great success of the year'. *Les Bergers* did find success mere months later in Vienna, where Offenbach could apparently do no wrong, at the Theater an der Wien. The *Revue et Gazette musicale de Paris* reported of the Vienna production: 'To our surprise, the act that proved most effective, contrary to what happened in Paris, was the third with its rustic realism.' Shortly after the run of *Les Bergers*, Offenbach closed his association with the Bouffes-Parisiens theatre for a second time.

The heartbeat duet from Act II, 'Reconnais-tu la voix d'Annette', displays similarities with another duet composed nine years later – that of Einstein and Rosalinde from Act II of Johann Strauss II's *Die Fledermaus* (1874). Strauss and Offenbach shared a mutual admiration, and it is not inconceivable that Strauss's duet was a discreet homage to his Parisian colleague, for he may well have heard one of the 29 performances of *Les Bergers* given in Vienna between 1866 and 1868 under the German title *Die Schäfer*. The Act III trio 'En attendant l'hymen' is a tour-de-force, an extended sequence of musical and dramatic events particularly remarkable for the dark, though simple, scoring of clarinet, bassoon, viola and cello, which underpins the reading of the false letter – the result of Nicot's Iago-like machinations – and for the crying/laughing effect, 'hi, hi, hi' of the final section, which carries the whole number to a spectacular conclusion.

The opera centres on a pair of thwarted lovers who are united thanks to the intervention of Eros, who sends them on a journey through time. In this extract from Act III, the time-travelling couple, renamed La Rouge and Nicot-la-Braise, are joined by a further pair of lovers: La Sincère and Le Menu. Nicot takes a mischievous delight in sowing distrust between the kitchen-girl Sincère and her fiancé Menu.

LA SINCÈRE

En attendant l'hymen
Donnez-moi z'un coup d'main
Pour laver les cuillères,
Les plats et les soupîères.

While waiting for the wedding
give me an 'and
with washing the spoons,
the dishes and tureens.

NICOT, LE MENU

En attendant l'hymen
Donnons-lui z'un coup d'main
Pour laver les cuillères,
Les plats et les soupîères.

While waiting for the wedding
let's give her an 'and
with washing the spoons,
the dishes and tureens.

NICOT

Je crois qu' voilà l' moment venu
De la brouiller avec le M'nu.

I think the moment's come
to turn her against Menu.

LE MENU

Ma joie est quasiment un' fièvre
J' peux pas croire' que j' s'rai vot' époux,
Qu'un pauvr' Menu chétif et mièvre
Est l'accordé d'un' fill' comm' vous.

My joy is almost feverish,
I can't b'lieve I'll be your 'usband,
that poor puny, silly Menu,
can get a girl like you.

LA SINCÈRE

Eh donc, le Menu,
Eh donc, c'est tout vu.
J' suis pas de ces maladroites
Qui veulent des maris grands;
J' sais qu' c'est dans les petites boîtes
Que sont les bons onguents.

Come on Menu,
come on, it's as good as done.
I'm not one of those awkward girls
who want a big husband;
I know the best things
Come in small packages.

LE MENU

Mais faut pas qu'on vous galantise,
Mon air hontif s'rait bien changé.
Quand j' rencont' mensonge ou feintise
J' cogn' dessus comm' un enragé.

But if someone were to make eyes at you,
my timid air could quickly change.
If I notice any lies or tricks
I'll lash out like a madman.

LA SINCÈRE

Bravo, le Menu!
T'es minc' mais trapu.
J' suis pas de ces maladroites, *etc.*

Bravo, Menu!
You're skinny but tough.
I'm not one of those awkward girls, *etc.*

NICOT

Écoute un peu, tu m' fais d'la peine
Tu n' vois donc pas, mon pauvr' Menu
Où-ce que cet' farceus'-là te mène?

Listen to me, I feel sorry for you.
Can't you see, poor Menu,
Where this woman is leading you?

LE MENU

Où-ce qu'elle me mène?

Where is she leading me?

NICOT

Tu m' fais d'la peine.
R'gard' donc seul'ment dans son fichu.

I feel sorry for you;
just look in her shawl.

LE MENU

Dans son fichu?
Ah! Qu'est-ce qu'il veut dire?
V'là la jalous'rie qui m' déchire.

In her shawl?
Ah! What does he mean?
Oh dear, I'm tortured by jealousy!

NICOT

R'gardes-y donc mais n' souffle rien.
Ce qu'on t'en dit c'est pour ton bien.

Take a peep, but don't breathe a word.
What I'm telling you is for your own good.

LA SINCÈRE

En attendant l'hymen,

While waiting for the wedding...

Donnons-lui z'un coup d' main...

let's give her an 'and...

LA SINCÈRE

Pour laver les cuillères...

with washing the spoons,

Les plats et les soupieres.

the plates and tureens.

NICOT

Tiens, vois-tu

So, do you see

C' petit papier rose

that piece of pink paper

Qui sort de son joli fichu?

poking out of her pretty shawl?

LE MENU

Ah, morgué! j' voudrais voir mais je n'ose pas.

Ah, dammit! I want to look but don't dare.

LA SINCÈRE

Eh ben, qu'est ce qu'il a donc l' Menu?

Hey, what's up with Menu?

Pourquoi qu'il avance et qu'il recule?

Why's he pacing to and fro?

LE MENU

El' dissimule.

She's hiding something.

NICOT

Va donc, va donc.

Go on, go on.

LE MENU

Allons.

All right.

NICOT

Courage.

Good luck.

LE MENU

J' le tiens.

I'll need it.

LA SINCÈRE

Quoi donc?

What now?

NICOT

(feigning surprise) Quoi donc?

(feigning surprise) What now?

LE MENU

Un billet doux dans vot' corsage.

A love-letter tucked into your bodice.

LA SINCÈRE

Un billet doux dans mon corsage!

A love-letter tucked into my bodice?

LE MENU

Qu'est c' que j'ai vu?

What's that?

NICOT

Qu'est c' que t'as vu?

What is it?

LE MENU

Qu'est c' que j'ai lu?

What 'ave I read?

«Tu vas, ma bell' Sincère,

'You're going, my lovely Sincère,

Épouser c'cornichon.

to marry that idiot.

Tu vas, ma bell' Sincère,
Épouser c'cornichon.

J'sais qu' ça n'est qu' pour te faire
Un semblant d'position.

J' sais qu' ça n'est qu' pour te faire
Un semblant d' position.

Viens ce soir à neuf heures
Dans le champ de cresson
Pour y cueillir des fleurs
Avec ton Veautendon.»

Qu'est c' qu'il dit? Qu'est c' qu'il chante?

J' comprends point.

Oh la la! Impudeuse et mentante!

(*furieuse*) Impudeuse?

Et mentante!

Vous n'êt' qu'un çï...

Et vous qu'un' ça.

Ah! Traiter une honnête fille comm' ça!
Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah!

Ah! Ah!

(*à part*) Allons, allons. Ça va, ça va.

Hi hi hi.

Hi hi hi, je pleur' de rage.

NICOT

'You're going, my lovely Sincère,
to marry that idiot.

LE MENU

'I know it's only to give yourself
some semblance of social standing.

NICOT

'I know that it's only to give you
some semblance of social standing.

LE MENU

'Come to the watercress field
at nine o'clock this evening
to pick flowers
with your Veautondon.'

LA SINCÈRE

What's he saying, what's he on about?

NICOT

I don't get it.

LE MENU

Oh! La la! Brass-necked and a liar!

LA SINCÈRE

(*furious*) Brass-necked?

LE MENU

Liar!

LA SINCÈRE

You're nothing but a

LE MENU

And you're nothing but a

LA SINCÈRE

Ah, fancy treating an honest girl like this!
Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah!

LE MENU

Ah! Ah!

NICOT

(*aside*) Come on, come on, it's going well.

LA SINCÈRE, NICOT, LE MENU

Hi hi hi.

LA SINCÈRE

Hi hi hi, I'm weeping with rage.

NICOT

Il enrage.

He's angry.

LA SINCÈRE, LE MENU

J' pleur' de rage.

I'm weeping with rage.

LA SINCÈRE, NICOT, LE MENU

Ah! Ah! Plus d' mariag'.

Ah! Ah! The wedding's off.

Hi hi hi. Ah! Ah!

Hi hi hi. Ah! Ah!

Ah non! Plus d' mariage.

The wedding's off.

LA SINCÈRE

Ah! C'est ainsi qu'on m' soupçonne.

Ah, so you suspect me.

LE MENU

Ah! C'est comm' ça qu'on m' trahit.

Ah, that's how you betray me.

NICOT

(à Menu) Ah! Vois-tu ben c' que j' t'avais dit.

(to Menu) See, I told you so.

LA SINCÈRE

Soyez donc gentille et bonne.

Be a good girl.

(cassant une assiette)

(she breaks a plate)

LE MENU

Soyez donc bon et gentil.

Be a good boy.

(cassant une assiette)

(he breaks a plate)

LA SINCÈRE

Pour qu'un Menu vous soupçonne

For a little midget to suspect you

(cassant une assiette)

(she breaks a plate)

NICOT

Est-il mauvais donc l' petit?

Is he bad then, this little chap?

(cassant une assiette)

(he breaks a plate)

LE MENU

Vous n' m'aurez plus en revoyure.

You'll never see me again.

LA SINCÈRE

Tout est fini, c'est positif.

It's all over, that's for sure.

LE MENU

J' vous quitt' pour toujours, parjure.

I'm ditching you for good, you double-crosser.

LA SINCÈRE

C'est bien moi qui t' plant' là, chétif.

I'm the one who's doing the dumping, you wimp!

LE MENU

Adieu, parjure.

Farewell, double-crosser.

LA SINCÈRE

Adieu, chétif.

Farewell, wimp.

LA SINCÈRE, NICOT, LE MENU

Hi hi hi.

Hi hi hi.

LA SINCÈRE

Hi, hi, hi, je pleur' de rage.

Hi hi hi, I'm weeping with rage.

NICOT

Il enrage

He's lost his rag.

LA SINCÈRE, LE MENU

J' pleur' de rage.

I'm weeping with rage.

LA SINCÈRE, NICOT, LE MENU

Ah! Ah! Plus d' mariag'.

Ah! Ah! The wedding's off.

Hi, hi, hi. Ah! Ah!

Hi hi hi. Ah! Ah!

Ah non, plus d' mariage.

The wedding's off.

[2] *Les Bergers*

'Reconnais-tu la voix'

Annette ... Elizabeth Vidal

Colin ... Colin Lee

The second act of 'Les Bergers' is set in the park of the château of the Marquis de Fonrose during the reign of Louis XV.

The thwarted lovers, united by Eros, have been reinvented as the shepherdess Annette and her swain Colin.

Here, they share a tender moment, measuring their heartbeats together.

ANNETTE

(mettant la main sur le coeur de Colin)

(placing her hand on Colin's heart)

Reconnais-tu la voix d'Annette

Do you recognise Annette's voice,

Coeur de mon Colin

O heart of my Colin?

COLIN

Tic tac tic tac, tic tac tic tac

Tic tac tic tac, tic tac tic tac

Tic et tac et tac.

Tic and tac and tac.

ANNETTE

Ne tressailles-tu pas de fête

Do you throb with joy

Là sous ma main?

there beneath my hand?

COLIN

Tic tac tic tac tic tac tic tac

Tic tac tic tac tic tac tic tac

Tic et tac et tac.

Tic and tac and tac.

Ce matin j'ai vu dans la plaine

On the plain this morning

Un galant bouquet.

I saw a colourful bouquet.

ANNETTE

Tic tac tic, tic tac tic,

Tic tac tic, tic tac tic,

Tic et tic et tic et tac.

Tic and tic and tic and tac.

De bleuets et de marjolaine

With cornflowers and marjoram

Colin l'avait fait.

Colin had fashioned it.

Tic et tac, tic et tac.

Tic and tac, tic and tac.

COLIN, ANNETTE

Tic et tac

Tic and tac

Tic et tic et tac et tac et tac.
Ah! Quel unisson sympathique!
La charmante leçon de musique!

(mettant sa main sur le coeur de Colin)

Palpiterais-tu de même
Si mon Colin m'oubliait?

Tic tac tic tac tic tac tic tac.
Me dirais-tu qu'elle m'aime
Si mon amour s'envolait?

Tic...

Tac...

Tic...

Tac...

(écoutant le coeur de Colin)

Son tic tac, je crois, s'arrête.
Colin est-il un trompeur?

Plus de tic tac chez Annette.
Vais-je donc perdre son coeur?

Nos amours sont envolées.

Nos âmes sont désolées.

Écoute bien. Tic.

N'entends-tu rien? Tac.

Tic tac

Tic tac

Tic et tac et tic et tac. Ah!

Tic and tic and tac and tac and tac.
Ah! What delightful unison!
What a charming music lesson!

ANNETTE

(putting her hand on Colin's heart)

Would you beat in this same way
if my Colin forgot me?

COLIN

Tic tac tic tac tic tac tic tac.
Would you tell me that she loves me
if my love flew away?

ANNETTE

Tic...

COLIN

Tac...

ANNETTE

Tic...

COLIN

Tac...

ANNETTE

(listening to Colin's heart)

Its tic-tac, I believe, has stopped.
Is Colin a deceiver?

COLIN

No more tic-tac from Annette.
Am I about to lose her heart?

ANNETTE

Our love has flown away.

COLIN

Our souls are woe-begone.

ANNETTE

Listen hard. Tic.

COLIN

Can't you hear anything? Tac.

ANNETTE

Tic-tac

COLIN

Tic-tac

ANNETTE, COLIN

Tic and tac and tic and tac. Ah!

ANNETTE

Reconnais-tu la voix d'Annette
Coeur de mon Colin? *etc.*

Do you recognise Annette's voice
O heart of my Colin? *etc.*

[3] *Le Voyage dans la lune*

'Je regarde vos jolis yeux'

Caprice ... Yvonne Kenny

For a full introduction to *Le Voyage dans la lune*, see page 22

Prince Caprice encounters Moon-Princess Fantasia and experiences his first ever feelings of love.

There's just one problem: Fantasia doesn't understand what he's talking about.

CAPRICE

Je regarde vos jolis yeux,
Votre main si douce et si blanche,
Votre cou souple et gracieux
Qui vers moi s'incline et se penche;
Je regarde ce bras charmant,
Je regarde ces lèvres roses,
Et je me dis en vous voyant
Je me dis tout bas bien des choses.
Je me dis:
Ah! Si j'osais!
Elle est si mignonne!
Que Dieu me pardonne!
Si j'osais! Si j'osais!
Oui, mais voilà
Je n'oserai jamais.
Je regarde ce pied coquet
Et cette taille si bien prise,
Ce fin corsage
Qui promet
Plus d'une enivrante surprise.
Je regarde ce qui se voit,
Je regarde ce qu'on devine,
Et tout bas je me dis, ma foi,
Voyant cette gentille mine,
Je me dis:
Ah! Si j'osais!
Elle est si mignonne!
Que Dieu me pardonne!

I look at your pretty eyes,
your soft white hand,
the supple, graceful neck
that you bend towards me;
I look at your charming arms,
I look at those red lips,
and say to myself as I look upon you,
to myself, softly, I say many things.
I say to myself,
Oh! If only I dared!
She is so sweet!
May God forgive me!
If only I dared! If only I dared!
Yes, but then
I'll never dare.
I look at this dainty foot
and well-proportioned figure,
this elegant bodice
which promises
more than one ravishing surprise.
I see what is visible,
I see what is conjecture,
and say very softly 'Oh my!...',
contemplating this lovely face,
I say to myself...
Ah! If only I dared!
She is so sweet!
May God forgive me!

Si j'osais! Si j'osais!

Oui, mais voilà

Je n'oserai jamais.

If only I dared! If only I dared!

Yes, but then

I'll never dare.

[4] *Le Voyage dans la lune*

'Ohé! Ohé!'

Caprice ... Jennifer Larmore

Geoffrey Mitchell Choir

Love was an unknown concept on the Moon, but thanks to Caprice's apple, love has taken hold of the Moon-dwellers, who all regard it as a serious disease. As Fantasia is now 'infected', King Cosmos decides to sell her off at a market. King Vlan and Caprice are at the market, disguised as charlatans; they succeed in inducing Cosmos himself to buy their Elixir of Apple.

CAPRICE

Ohé! Ohé! Les badauds!

Ohé! Grands, petits, gras et gros.

Gens tranquilles, intrigants,

Imbéciles, ignorants,

Bonnes têtes, grosses bêtes,

Tous, approchez! Tous, écoutez!

Venez! Venez!

Hey! Hey! Casual onlookers!

Hey! Tall ones, short ones, big and fat ones,

quiet ones, schemers,

idiots, dunces,

bright sparks, dullards,

All of you come closer! All listen to me!

Roll up! Roll up!

CAPRICE & CHORUS

Ohé! Ohé! Petits et grands!

Voilà, voilà les charlatans!

Ohé! Ohé! voilà les charlatans!

Hey-ho! Hey-ho! Big and little alike!

The charlatans are here!

Hey-ho! Hey-ho! The charlatans are here!

CAPRICE

Ce n'est pas pour l'appât vulgaire

D'un peu d'or ou d'un peu d'argent,

Messieurs, que nous venons vous faire sirs,

Sur cette place un boniment.

1er couplet

Ce n'est pas même pour la gloire,

Ce n'est pas pour nous faire un nom,

Ni dans les fastes de l'histoire

Pour être inscrits,

Non, messieurs, non.

Notre ambition est bien plus belle

Et je le dis avec fierté:

Nous cherchons une clientèle

Par amour de l'humanité.

It's not for the vulgar lure

of a handful of gold or silver,

that we come to give you

our salesmen's patter in this square.

1st couplet

Nor is it for vainglory,

or to make a name for ourselves,

or for the sake of being

mentioned in history books.

No, sirs, no.

Our ambition is more worthy,

and I can tell you proudly

that we look for customers

out of love for humankind.

CAPRICE & CHORUS

Ohé! Ohé! Petits et grands, *etc.*

Hey-ho! Hey-ho! Big and little alike, *etc.*

CAPRICE

2eme couplet

À peine au sortir du collège,
Nous pouvions nous faire avocats,
Commerçants, maîtres de manège,
Naturalistes, magistrats.
Nous pouvions, nous avons nos grades,
Montrer le grec et le latin.
Nous pouvions dans les ambassades
Faire très bien notre chemin.
Notre embarras était immense,
Tous ces métiers sont excellents.
Un seul les résume en substance:
Nous nous sommes fait charlatans.

2nd couplet

As soon as we left school
we could have become lawyers,
businessmen, riding instructors,
naturalists, magistrates.
We could (we passed the exams)
have showed off our Greek and Latin.
We could have made a career
on the staff of embassies.
Our choice was immense,
all these professions are excellent.
But only one sums them all up:
we became charlatans.

CAPRICE & CHORUS

Ohé! Ohé! Petits et grands, *etc.*

Hey-ho! Hey-ho! Big and little alike, *etc.*

[5] *La Rose de Saint-Flour*

Opérette in one act

Libretto by Michel Carré

First performance: 12 June 1856

Théâtre des Bouffes-Parisiens, Paris

'Chette marmite neuve'

Marcachu ... Colin Lee

La Rose De Saint-Flour was first performed in the 1856 summer season at the Salle Marigny, less than a year after the initial opening of the Bouffes-Parisiens. By this time, Offenbach had already set about doing everything he could to acquire an aura of respectability for his company. For *La Rose de Saint-Flour*, his librettist was the highly esteemed Michel Carré (who wrote with Jules Barbier the libretto for Gounod's *Faust*, as well as the play on which Offenbach's own *Les Contes d'Hoffmann* was to be based). Offenbach had already included Rossini's *Il Signor Bruschino* and Mozart's *Der Schauspieldirektor* in his programming, both given in new French versions. Furthermore, he had set up a competition for young composers in which they had to write a one-act operetta to the libretto *Le Docteur Miracle* by Ludovic Halévy and Léon Battu.

Offenbach introduced all of these events to his public in a very high-minded article published in *Le Ménestrel* and *Revue et Gazette musicale de Paris*, in which he discussed at length the history of the French *opéra-comique*; the intention of this article was to confirm his mission statement for the Bouffes-Parisiens, in particular the aspiration to produce music of high quality. Ironically, the composers' competition was won jointly by Georges Bizet and Charles Lecocq, both later to become rivals of Offenbach. The struggling Bizet later became very resentful towards his former patron, while Charles Lecocq gave Offenbach cause for extreme discomfort in

the early 1870s by achieving great success at a time when his own star seemed to have waned, and by enjoying a collaboration with Meilhac and Halévy, librettists of many of Offenbach's triumphs.

This extract could have been written to illustrate Offenbach's article. *La Rose de Saint-Flour* is a one-act *opérette* depicting three rather crude peasant characters; yet the hopeless Marcachu, who does not even get his girl, still manages to express himself in what is in effect an elegant bel canto aria featuring a full cadenza with top B.

Pierrette, who runs a cabaret in the Auvergne, is torn between two suitors – the coppersmith Marcachu, who has a speech impediment, and the cobbler Chapailloux. For the feast of Saint-Pierre, each brings Pierrette a present:

Chapailloux, a pair of shoes; and Marcachu, a cooking-pot.

MARCACHU

Chette marmite neuve,
Mamjel', est une preuve
De mon amour pour vous,
De mon amour pour vous.
Elle est choline et bonne.
Ch'est moi qui vous la donne
Pour fair' la choupe' aux choux,
Pour fair' la choupe' aux choux.
La choupe', la choupe', la choupe', etc.
À votre crémaillère
Je la pends de ma main.
Pour fêter la Chaint-Pierre
Je n'attends point demain.
Chi vous en êt' bien ai-je
À moi penchez un peu.
Mon coeur est chur la braiçe
Comme elle est chur le feu.
Mon coeur, etc.
Ah, ah, ah, ah! Houlà, houlà, etc.
Chette marmite neuve,
Mamjel', est une preuve, etc.

Thith new cooking-pot
mith, izth pwoof
of my love for you,
of my love for you.
It izth good and tholid.
It'th me who givezth it to you,
to make cabbage thoup,
to make cabbage thoup.
The thoup, the thoup, the thoup, etc.
Upon your hearth's pot-hanger
I hang it with my own hand.
I can't wait for tomowwow
to thelebwater Thaint Peter.
If you appwove of it,
think of me a little
My heart izth azth much on fire,
azth the pot above your hearth.
My heart, etc.
Ah, ah, ah, ah! Ola, ola, etc.
Thith new cooking-pot
mith, izth pwoof, etc.

[6] *Boule de neige*

Opéra-bouffe in three acts

Libretto by Charles Nuitter and Étienne Tréfeu

First performance: 14 December 1871

Théâtre des Bouffes-Parisiens, Paris

'Conspiration des guitares'

Le Caporal ... Mark le Brocq Polkakoff ... Mark Wilde Balabrelock ... Mark Stone

Potapotinski ... André Cognet Krapack ... Alastair Miles

Boule de neige (1871) is a reworking of *Barkouf* (1860), a piece that was probably the biggest failure of Offenbach's career. *Barkouf* was the first Offenbach work to be performed at the theatre that was the object of his ambitions: the Opéra-Comique.

By 1860 Offenbach had achieved celebrity status with the spectacular success of *Orphée aux Enfers*. In 1859/60 his ballet *Le Papillon* had a very successful run at the Opéra, causing outrage in certain circles. Now he made another significant attempt to be taken seriously by the musical establishment. But Eugène Scribe and Henri Boissieux's libretto for *Barkouf*, the story of a dog with magical powers, was not appropriate for an Opéra-Comique audience. Offenbach criticised the 'imitation grand opera' regularly performed in that venue, but strained too far in the opposite direction.

A proportion of the audience gave *Barkouf* a good reception at its premiere, but adverse reviews accelerated its downfall, and it was taken off after just seven performances. Numerous negative articles deemed it unseemly for Offenbach works to be performed at the Opéra-Comique. One of these articles was written by Hector Berlioz. Offenbach had supported and admired Berlioz before the latter became fashionable, but Berlioz's review of *Barkouf* provoked a bitterness in Offenbach which he carried with him for the rest of his life. He later took a small revenge on Berlioz in *Il Signor Fagotto* (see page 57).

Eleven years later Offenbach created *Boule de neige* to a new libretto by Nuitter and Tréfeu, re-using much of the music of *Barkouf*. This time, the leading character was a bear rather than a dog, and in any case the performances took place in Offenbach's old home theatre, the Bouffes-Parisiens, a more comfortable venue for a work of social satire featuring many ridiculous elements. *Boule de neige* received around 40 performances – not a failure on the scale of *Barkouf*, but no success either; reviews were variable, and after this experience Offenbach stayed away from the Bouffes-Parisiens for some two-and-a-half years.

The two numbers from *Boule de neige* featured on this recording are both from Act III and show Offenbach on winning form. The 'Conspiration des guitares', ostensibly sung by six dangerous politicians, is introduced by pizzicato violins, and finds our murderous conspirators attempting to imitate guitars and whispering in strict rhythm. The spectacular Final Scene (CD 2 track 20) contains a delectably ironic Brindisi, and culminates in a crowd-pleasing reprise of the work's title number (previously heard in Act II), this time finishing with a plea to the audience: 'Come back every evening to see *Boule de neige*.'

The action takes place in a city in Asian Russia. The glass-maker Kachmir is in love with the bear-tamer Olga, and the fur-dealer Schamyl loves Grégorine, the daughter of the wily politician Balabrelock. Kachmir is pronounced Hospodar², whereupon the capricious Great Khan has him arrested, and names a new Hospodar – Olga's white bear Boule-de-Neige (snowball). Olga disguises Kachmir as a bear so he can govern in the interests of the people, but is later imprisoned in a harem where Schamyl is captain of the guard. Balabrelock and other ministers hatch a plan to poison the Bear-Hospodar.

The conspirators decide that the best way to conceal their machinations is to sing very loudly, accompanied by guitars.

KRAPACK

Mais ne parlons pas si haut!

We mustn't speak so loudly!

Soyons prudents, il le faut!

We must be prudent: it's important!

BALABRELOCK

Si vous parlez bas,

If you speak quietly

² A Hospodar is a Lord, or ruler of a particular region.

Ça ne fait pas doute
Chacun vous écoute.

then we can be sure
that everyone's listening.

ALL

Chacun vous écoute.

Everyone's listening.

KRAPACK, THEN ALL

Mais si vous chantez, on n'écoute pas!
Et tout haut conspirons! Et gaiement

But if you sing, no-one will listen!
Let's conspire very loudly! And merrily!

ALL

Conspirons! Conspirons!
Mais soyons de joyeux conspirateurs!
Conspirons! Conspirons!
Mais cachons nos complots sous les fleurs! (Zing!)
La, la, la, la.

Let's conspire! Let's conspire!
But let's be jolly conspirators!
Let's conspire! Let's conspire!
But hide our plots under flowers! (Zing!)
La, la, la, la.

KRAPACK

Ah! Mes enfants, c'est bon de rire!

Ah, lads, it's good to laugh!

POLKAKOFF

Mais gardons-nous de rire aux éclats!

But let's be careful to avoid loud guffaws!

POTAPOTINSKI

On ne rit pas quand on conspire!

You're not supposed to laugh while conspiring!

KRAPACK

Quand on rit trop, on ne s'entend pas!

If we laugh too much, we can't hear each other!

BALABRELOCK, THEN ALL

Qui comploté,
Toujours chuchotte!
C'est donc le cas
De chuchotter bas!
Chuchutons tout bas. Chut.

Men who plot
should always speak in whispers!
It's the done thing
to whisper very quietly!
Let's whisper very quietly. Sh.

LE CAPORAL

Ch ch ch ch ch!

Sh sh sh sh sh sh!

ALL

Ratatouille!

Ratatouille!

BALABRELOCK

Ch ch ch ch ch ch

Sh sh sh sh sh sh

ALL

La patrouille!
Ch ch ch ch ch ch
Étranglé!
Ch ch ch ch ch ch
Empalé!
Ch ch ch ch ch ch

The patrol!
Sh sh sh sh sh sh
Strangled!
Sh sh sh sh sh sh
Impaled!
Sh sh sh sh sh sh

Sans capsule!

Ch ch ch ch ch ch

En pilule!

Ch ch ch ch ch ch

Aloès!

Ch ch ch ch ch ch

Ad Patrès!

Ne crions pas! Ne crions pas! Et parlons bas!

Conspirons! Conspirons!

Mais soyons de joyeux conspirateurs!

Conspirons! Conspirons!

Mais cachons nos complots sous les fleurs!

La la la la.

Conspirons et chantons!

Without detonator!

Sh sh sh sh sh sh

In a pill!

Sh sh sh sh sh sh

Aloes!

Sh sh sh sh sh sh

To his death!

Don't shout! Don't shout! Speak quietly!

Let's conspire! Let's conspire!

But let's be jolly conspirators!

Let's conspire! Let's conspire!

But hide our plots under flowers!

La la la la.

Let's conspire and sing!

[7] *L'Île de Tulipatan*

Opéra-bouffe in one act

Libretto by Henri-Charles Chivot and Henri-Alfred Duru

First performance: 30 September 1868

Théâtre des Bouffes-Parisiens, Paris

'Couplets de Canard'

Cacatois XXIII ... Loïc Félix

Geoffrey Mitchell Choir

By 1868 it had been three years since Offenbach had composed a new piece for his old theatre, the Bouffes-Parisiens. A short-lived management, which had abandoned operettas entirely in favour of vaudevilles, was then replaced by Jules Noriac, who wasted no time in winning Offenbach back. Noriac renovated the theatre to make it as big as the Variétés. He planned a big re-opening for September 1868 with a programme of four one-act comic operas: *L'Arche Marion* by Alberic Sécond and Adolphe Hibbelle; *Le Fife enchanté* and *L'Île de Tulipatan* by Offenbach; and *Deux Vieilles Gardes* by Delibes.

Offenbach received a hero's welcome in his former theatre. The critic Gustave Bertrand reported: 'The God of this venue, the grand maestrino Offenbach's return to his old home was loudly celebrated. The new pieces were both absolutely successful, in different genres. *L'Île de Tulipatan* is an uproarious *bouffonnerie*, and *Le Fife enchanté* is in a much more refined manner, lighter and mixed with tenderness. After *L'Île de Tulipatan*, the craze turned to delirium.'

It is not inconceivable that the text of this number is intended as a message from Offenbach himself to his audience, on a night when he was making a significant comeback. He had conflicts with people on account of his leadership, took financial risks, and gambled. He was also quite fearless in communicating with his public in a very direct way, such as the articles he wrote at key moments in his career.

*King Cacatois XXIII of the mythical island of Tulipatan is a typical Offenbachian monarch – totally ridiculous.
His son is in fact a girl disguised as a man by his wife in order to convince him he has a male heir – revelations which
unravel as the piece unfolds. In this number, Cacatois, surrounded by his courtiers, introduces himself.*

CACATOIS

1er couplet

Prince doux et fort débonnaire,
Vous voyez le Grand Cacatois.
Mes sujets, dont je suis le père,
M'aiment tous, du moins je le crois.
Si l'on vous dit dans les gazettes
Que je ne dirige pas bien, that
Que j'ai payé toutes mes dettes,
Mes chers amis, n'en croyez rien.
Sur ma parole
C'est un canard³,
Un bruit frivole,
Un traquenard.
Sur ma parole
C'est un canard.

1st couplet

A kind and very easy-going prince
you see before you in the Great Cacatois.
My subjects, to whom I am a father,
all love me, or so I believe.
If the papers tell you
I'm no good as a leader,
or that I've paid all my debts,
dear friends, don't believe any of it.
Upon my word
it's a canard
mere tittle-tattle,
a hoax.
Upon my word
it's a canard.

CACATOIS & CHORUS

(imitant le canard)

Coin, coin, coin, coin.
C'est un canard, c'est un canard.

(imitating a duck)

Quack, quack, quack, quack.
It's a canard, it's a canard.

CACATOIS

2e couplet

Si parfois un journal affirme,
En tête de ses faits divers,
Que je suis un affreux infirme
Et que j'entends tout de travers,
Si l'on dit que je perds la tête
Et ma fortune aux dominos,
Que je suis quelquefois pompette,
Ne croyez pas à ce propos.
Sur ma parole
C'est un canard,
Un bruit frivole,
Un traquenard.
Sur ma parole

2nd couplet

If a newspaper claims,
at the top of its gossip column,
that I'm terribly feeble-minded
and can't make sense of anything,
if they say that I lose my temper
and my fortune at dominoes,
that I am sometimes tipsy,
don't believe it.
Upon my word
it's a canard,
mere tittle-tattle
a hoax.
Upon my word

³ In French, *canard* refers both to a bird ('a duck') and an extravagant story circulated as a hoax ('a canard'); moreover, *faire un canard* or *faire un couac* means 'to hit a false note'.

C'est un canard.

it's a canard.

CACATOIS & CHORUS

(*imitant le canard*)

(*imitating a duck*)

Coin, coin, coin, coin, *etc.*

Quack, quack, quack, quack, *etc.*

[8] *La Boulangère a des écus*

Opéra-bouffé in three acts

Libretto by Henri Meilhac and Ludovic Halévy

First performance: 19 October 1875

Théâtre des Variétés, Paris

'Ce qu' j'ai'

Toinon ... Cassandre Berthon

Offenbach produced some of his most successful works in collaboration with the librettists Henri Meilhac and Ludovic Halévy. Between 1863 and 1869 they produced nine operettas, six of which still regularly feature in the repertoire of French opera companies today. After *Les Brigands* in 1869, this collaboration effectively came to an end. 'Meil and Hal' continued to write librettos together, but for other composers, notably Charles Lecocq. In 1875, when Offenbach was already working on *Le Voyage dans la lune* and *La Créole*, he sought to revive their collaboration.

La Boulangère a des écus was intended as a vehicle for 'their' prima-donna Hortense Schneider, star of *La Belle Hélène*, *La Grande-Duchesse de Gérolstein* and *La Périchole*, who would be brought out of semi-retirement for the occasion. Meilhac and Halévy needed much cajoling from Offenbach to get the work done, and Schneider complained so much about her role during rehearsals that she was replaced by another singer, Marie Aimée – to which Schneider responded with legal proceedings. In the event, *La Boulangère* was Meilhac and Halévy's tenth and final libretto for Offenbach. It was a well-crafted piece of writing that inspired from Offenbach a few fine musical numbers, but which as a whole lacked the required sparkle. Marie Aimée was considered inadequate as Margot, lacking Schneider's presence and charisma, and the show closed in December 1875, after a run of two months. However, its musical highlights are well worth hearing – not least Toinon's plaintive tartwith-a-heart aria 'Ce qu' j'ai' and the outrageous singing-competition antics of rivals Margot and Toinon in 'Ah! Qu'il est beau'.

In his diary, Ludovic Halévy's reflected poignantly on this episode in their careers: 'Offenbach, Meilhac and myself, we couldn't do it any more, that's the truth. We've done too much of it already, and we're not twenty years old any more, not even forty. Daring and fantasy go together with youth. I do believe we know our craft very well by now. And that in itself is no small inconvenience. It makes us timid and prudent. We no longer have the boldness of inexperience, and so we create *La Boulangère*, a dull, banal work which can neither succeed nor fail; that's what has happened.'

The scene is set outside Toinon's cabaret in Paris in 1718. Toinon is pining for her lover, Bernadille, who is on the run. Bernadille had once been part of a conspiracy against the Regent, and is now suspected of a robbery he didn't commit.

TOINON

Ce qu' j'ai? tu le demandes?

What's up? Do you really need to ask?

Ce qu' j'ai? tu vois mes pleurs.
Les douleurs les plus grandes
N'sont rien près d' mes douleurs.
On peut êtr' malheureuse,
On n' peut pas l'être autant!
J'ai que j' suis amoureuse,
J'ai que j' suis amoureuse
Et qu'on m' prend mon amant,
Et qu'on m' prend mon amant!
En vain j' creus' ma cervelle
Pour trouver qu'équ' moyen
Contr' un' chos' si cruelle,
Je cherch' et n' trouve rien.
Quell' destinée affreuse,
Quel horrible tourment!
J'ai que j' suis amoureuse,
J'ai que j' suis amoureuse
Et qu'on m' prend mon amant,
Et qu'on m' prend mon amant!

What's up? Look at my tears.
The greatest sorrows
are nothing compared to mine.
Sadness is one thing,
this is worse than that!
The problem is I'm in love,
I'm in love
and they're taking my lover away,
taking my lover away!
In vain I rack my brains,
trying to find a way
to solve this cruel dilemma,
I look but find no solution.
Oh, what a dreadful fate,
what terrible torment!
The problem is I'm in love,
I'm in love,
and they're taking my lover away,
Taking my lover away.

[9] *La Boulangère a des écus*

'Ah! Qu'il est beau'

Margot ... Yvonne Kenny Toinon ... Cassandre Berthon
Bernadille ... Loïc Félix Le Commissionnaire ... Mark le Brocq
Flammèche ... Mark Wilde Délicat ... Mark Stone
Geoffrey Mitchell Choir

*The police commissioner and his two sidekicks, Flammèche and Délicat, intend to arrest Bernadille.
The wealthy baker Margot, who desires Bernadille, persuades Criquebert, a Swiss man who is in love with her,
to swap clothes with Bernadille and be arrested in his place. Bernadille is now pretending to be Swiss, and Margot
is plotting her next move: to install Bernadille as a baker's boy – and her lover.*

MARGOT

Ah! Qu'il est beau ce gaillard-là!

Ah! How handsome that fellow is!

TOINON

Il est encor mieux comme ça.

He looks even better like that.

MARGOT, TOINON

Ah! Qu'il est beau ce gaillard-là!

Ah! How handsome that fellow is!

BERNADILLE

Foilà, voilà, voilà,
Le suisse temanté.

'ere I am,
ze Switzer you have called for.

LE COMMISSIONNAIRE, FLAMMÈCHE, DÉLICAT

Ah! Qu'il est bien ce suisse-là!

Ah! That Switzer's great!

MARGOT, TOINON, CHORUS

Ah! Qu'il est bien.

Ah! He's great.

Ah! Qu'il est beau ce suisse-là!

Ah! How handsome that Switzer is!

Ah! Qu'il est beau ce gaillard-là!

Ah! How handsome that fellow is!

[10] *Une nuit blanche*

Opéra-comique in one act

Libretto by Édouard Plouvier

First performance: 5 July 1855

Théâtre des Bouffes-Parisiens, Paris

'Allons, Fanchette... Aimons le vin'

Jean...Mark Stone Fanchette...Laura Claycomb Hercule...Colin Lee

The opening of the Bouffes-Parisiens on 5 July 1855 was an explosion in the theatrical life of Paris. After many months of careful planning and laborious negotiations, Offenbach was finally able to open his own theatre at a time when the Universal Exhibition in Paris was at its height. Offenbach, along with many other theatre proprietors, knew that the influx of tourists to the Exhibition would bring a great number of potential theatre-goers; he capitalised on this yet further by taking a venue, the tiny wooden Salle Lacaze (capacity 300) opposite the Palais de l'Industrie, one of the chief venues where the Exhibition was taking place. His theatre was intended to be a more refined version of the Folies Nouvelles, which was frequented by the demi-monde; Offenbach's target audience was the fashionable middle-class, and one of his first coups was to get the backing of the fashionable newspaper *Le Figaro*.

The programme on that opening night began with the curtain-raiser *Entrez, Mesdames et Messieurs* (to the first-ever libretto by the 21-year-old Ludovic Halévy, later one of Offenbach's major collaborators), followed by the piece represented here *Une nuit blanche* (an *opéra-comique*), *Les Deux Aveugles* (a *bouffonnerie musicale*) and *Arlequin Barbier* (a *ballet-bouffon*). The theatrical authorities had issued the Bouffes-Parisiens with numerous regulations, notably as to how many characters could be depicted on stage at any given time: 'Pantomimes & Harlequinades with five persons, Comic scenes and musical dialogues with two or three characters', etc. They nevertheless enjoyed a triumph and sold-out houses became the norm. As a result, they were in a position to give their winter season at the much larger Salle Choiseul (capacity 900).

'Aimons le vin' is a very typical Offenbachian *chanson*, of a kind that he could produce effortlessly at any point in his career, in jovial 2/4 time with repeated-note string accompaniment. He establishes a tonic-dominant harmony which for a whole page seems simple to the point of being inconsequential; but then, by throwing in a tiny chromatic inflexion ('dans les coupes vermeilles' / 'nos maux de chaque jour'), he lifts his material into the realms of the delightful and totally memorable. Offenbach's ability to 'stretch' basic tonic and dominant chords in this way, creating melodies that are simple, memorable and singable all at the same time, is one of the key factors in his enduring charm.

Jean is a French smuggler, trafficking with Belgium. He has recently married Fanchette and they are living together in a little village near the border. Hercule, Fanchette's cousin and a rather ridiculous customs-officer, knows what they are up to and fancies Fanchette himself. He inveigles his way into their house, but the couple make him drink: if he stays till morning, their colleagues will be able to do a good night's work...

CHANSON À BOIRE ET ENSEMBLE

JEAN

Allons, Fanchette, allons! Versez, ma ménagère!
Dépêchez-vous, commencez à faire les honneurs.
Du vieux vin jusqu'au bord emplissez votre verre!
Quand nous aurons vidé la bouteille dernière,
La cave est là tous près pleine de vins meilleurs,
Ouverte aux francs buveurs!
Aimons le vin,

Come on Fanchette! Pour the wine, hostess!
Hurry up, start doing the honours.
Fill your glass to the brim with vintage wine!
When we've emptied the last bottle
the cellar is close by, stocked with better wines,
open to honest drinkers!
We love wine...

HERCULE

Aimons le vin, ...

We love wine...

JEAN

Pour fêter la nature.
Avec le vin !

Or celebrating nature.
With wine!

HERCULE

Avec le vin

With wine...

JEAN

Dans le monde enchanté,
Le créateur

...in this enchanted world,
the Creator...

HERCULE

Le créateur...

the Creator...

JEAN

Verse à la créature...
L'espoir...

bestows upon his creatures
hope...

HERCULE

L'espoir...

hope...

JEAN

L'amour...

love...

HERCULE

L'amour...

love...

JEAN

L'amour, la force et la santé.
Le ciel sourit dans les coupes vermeilles:
Pour oublier nos maux de chaque jour,
À notre sang mêlons le sang des treilles,
Le front paré des roses de l'amour!

Love, strength and health.
Heaven smiles in the crimson goblets:
To forget the daily grind
let's mix our blood with the blood of the vine,
heads crowned with the roses of love!

Que l'ivresse charmeresse
s'allume en nos coeurs joyeux!
C'est pour vivre, qu'on s'enivre
D'amour jeune et de vin vieux.

Let drunkenness cast its spell
over our merry hearts!
To enjoy life, let's get tipsy
on young love and old wine.

FANCHETTE, HERCULE, JEAN

Que l'ivresse charmeresse
S'allume en nos coeurs joyeux!
C'est pour vivre, qu'on s'enivre
D'amour jeune et de vin vieux.

Let drunkenness cast its spell
over our merry hearts!
To enjoy life, let's get tipsy
on young love and old wine.

JEAN

Depuis le temps

Since the time

HERCULE

Depuis le temps

Since the time

JEAN

Qu'Ève a cueilli la pomme,
On la reproche

when Eve picked the apple,
people have reproached...

HERCULE

On la reproche...

people have reproached...

JEAN

Aux femmes sans pitié.
Mais le raisin...

women mercilessly.
But the grape...

HERCULE

Mais le raisin...

But the grape...

JEAN

Qui réjouit tant l'homme,
Peut bien...

that brings such cheer to men,
can...

HERCULE

Peut bien...

can...

JEAN

Aussi...

equally...

HERCULE

Aussi...

equally...

JEAN

Réjouir sa moitié!
La femme doit dans les coupes vermeilles
Boire la force et l'espoir chaque jour;
Rougir sa lèvre au sang divin des treilles,
Le front paré des roses de l'amour.
Que l'ivresse charmeresse
S'allume en nos coeurs joyeux!

bring cheer to the girls!
In these crimson glasses, a woman should
find strength and hope each day;
redden her lips with the heavenly blood of wine,
her head crowned with the roses of love.
Let drunkenness cast its spell
over our merry hearts!

C'est pour vivre, qu'on s'enivre
D'amour jeune et de vin vieux.

To enjoy life, let's get tipsy
on young love and old wine.

FANCHETTE, HERCULE, JEAN

Que l'ivresse charmeresse
S'allume en nos coeurs joyeux
C'est pour vivre, qu'on s'enivre
D'amour jeune et de vin vieux.

Let drunkenness cast its spell
over our merry hearts!
To enjoy life, let's get tipsy
on young love and old wine.

[11] *Il Signor Fagotto*

Opéra-comique in one act

Libretto by Charles Nutter and Étienne Tréfeu

First performance: 11 July 1863

Kursaal, Bad Ems

'Nous voilà seuls'

Moschetta...Cassandre Berthon Bacolo...Mark le Brocq

During 1863 Offenbach saw Zulma Bouffar (1843–1909) performing in Bad Hombourg and immediately engaged her for that year's Bad Ems season. Almost immediately, she became one of his foremost leading ladies, starring in a considerable number of his works. For a long period she was also Offenbach's mistress, and remained an important figure to him for the rest of his life. Bouffar was a singing actress who had first appeared in public at the age of six and had performed pieces from the Bouffes-Parisiens repertoire in Liège before she met Offenbach. She rivalled Hortense Schneider in the number and importance of the roles Offenbach wrote for her, but whereas Schneider was often cast as the grande dame, the gamine Bouffar had quite a different profile, usually playing trouser-roles or maids.

The Bad Ems season and summer residence had by this point become something of an annual event in Offenbach's calendar, and in 1863 it was longer than usual. Two new pieces featured roles for Zulma Bouffar: in *Il Signor Fagotto* she played the maid Moschetta, as well as the female title-role in *Lisichen et Fritzchen*. Offenbach also gave performances of some 10 other of his works in Ems that year and, possibly inspired by his performer, took what was for him the unusual step of conducting the premiere of *Il Signor Fagotto* himself. This was also the first collaboration of the librettists Charles Nutter and Étienne Tréfeu, who subsequently wrote seven more librettos for Offenbach.

Offenbach dedicated *Il Signor Fagotto* 'to [my] friend Hanslick'. Eduard Hanslick (1825–1904), the Austrian critic famous for championing Schumann and Brahms and criticising Wagner, was an admirer of Offenbach. *Fagotto*, whose story concerns a wealthy music-lover, features a parody of the music of Berlioz, clearly intended to delight and amuse Hanslick, a former admirer – turned detractor – of Berlioz. These musical jibes proved even more apt at the time of *Fagotto*'s well-received Bouffes-Parisiens premiere in January 1864, which came just a few weeks after the failure of Berlioz's *Les Troyens* at Paris's Théâtre-Lyrique. There is a further irony here: by that time, Offenbach was in Vienna rehearsing for the premiere of his four-act opera *Die Rheinmühen*. Like *Les Troyens*, *Die Rheinmühen* was a hugely ambitious work that stretched its creator to the limits, faced failure at its first appearance, but which was subsequently rehabilitated after its composer's death.

Musical jokes abound, even in this duet for the two servants (musical expertise knows no bounds in this household!). Bacolo and Moschetta even enjoy the luxury of a small cadenza ('cuisinière') before launching into the duet proper, which turns into an entertaining play on musical terms.

Bertolucci, a music lover, has adorned the walls of his salon with framed letters sent to him by his musical idol, Maestro Fagotto. In fact, the letters have all been forged by Bertolucci's servant Bacolo; Bacolo intends to use the influence of 'Maestro Fagotto' to prevent the arranged marriage of Bertolucci's daughter, and to unite the girl with her true lover, her music teacher. Bacolo is supported in all of this by his beloved fellow-servant Moschetta. Left alone, these two celebrate the joys of love, cooking and singing.

BACOLO

Nous voilà seuls, vive le tête-à-tête
Pour s'expliquer en liberté.
Quand ze te vis, çarmante déité,
Ze me souis dis : « ah! mon affaire est » faite.

Here we are alone, a good old tête-à-tête,
is ideal for speaking freely.
When I saw you, charming Goddess,
I said to myself: 'Ah! this one will do me fine.'

MOSCHETTA

Si j'étais, si j'étais simple soubrette,
Vous ne m'en diriez pas tant.

If I were a simple soubrette
you wouldn't say such things.

BACOLO

Si, vraiment, tout autant, tout autant, tout autant.

Yes really, I would, I would, I would.

MOSCHETTA

Quoi, vraiment? Je pourrais vous plaire
Même si j'étais cuisinière?

What, really? You could like me
even if I were a cook?

BACOLO (*with a strong Italian accent*)

Cou-i-si-ni-ère?

A cook?

MOSCHETTA

Cuisinière.

A cook.

BACOLO (*with an exaggerated French accent*)

Cu-i-si-ni-ère?

A cook?

MOSCHETTA

Cuisinière.

A cook.

BACOLO

Écoute!
Tant de grâce,
Teint vermeil
Qui dépasse
Le soleil.
L'étincelle
De tes yeux
Éteint celle
De tes feux.

Well now!
Such grace,
rosy cheeks,
which outshine
the sun.
The spark
from your eyes
makes those from your fire
look pale.

Réponds!

Cuisinière,
Cordon bleu.
Je suis fière
De mon feu.
Qui rissole?
C'est le four!
Qui console?
C'est l'amour!

Answer me!

MOSCHETTA

A cook,
Cordon Bleu.
I'm proud
of my fire.
What cooks the food?
The oven!
What brings comfort?
Love!

BACOLO

Charmant! À moi!
En musique,
En ragoûts,
Je m'explique
Tous les goûts.
Dis quel homme
N'aime les
Pois qu'on nomme
Flageolets.
À toi!

Charming! My turn!
In music,
in stews,
I understand
all tastes.
Say what man
does not love the
peas one calls
flageolets?
Your turn!

MOSCHETTA

Vos paroles
Valent mes
Casseroles,
Je le sais.
Par cet homme
Mon cœur pris
Se sent comme sur le grill.

Your words
are as good as my
casseroles,
I know that.
My heart,
captivated by this man,
feels as if it's on the grill.

MOSCHETTA, BACOLO

Ah!

Ah!

BACOLO

Ah! Tiens, femme sensible,
Tu viens de m'embraser.
M'éteindre est impossible.
Je voudrais t'épouser.

Ah! You know, sensitive woman
you have just set me ablaze.
To extinguish me is impossible.
I would like to marry you.

MOSCHETTA

Moi?

Me?

BACOLO

Toi!

You!

MOSCHETTA

Moi?

Me?

BACOLO

Oui.

Yes.

MOSCHETTA, BACOLO

Chantons la cuisine.

Let's sing the praises of cooking.

Non, rien n'est plus doux.

Nothing is nicer.

Science divine

It's a heavenly skill

Que nous aimons tous.

that all appreciate.

Chantons-la toujours,

Let's sing its praises forever,

Chantons mes amours,

let's sing the praises of things we love,

Chantons-la toujours,

let's sing its praises forever,

Mes amours.

my love.

BACOLO

En amour, on commence andante

In love we begin andante

Et puis, s'échauffant un poco,

and then, warming up un poco,

MOSCHETTA

Et puis, s'échauffant un poco,

and then, warming up un poco,

BACOLO

On suit une marche croissante

we gradually increase the tempo

Qui vous mène à l'allegretto,

which leads to an allegretto,

MOSCHETTA

Qui vous mène à l'allegretto,

which leads to an allegretto,

BACOLO

Que complète alors le presto,

which culminates in a presto,

Prestissimo.

prestissimo.

MOSCHETTA

Presto, presto.

Presto presto.

MOSCHETTA, BACOLO

Chantons la cuisine, *etc.*

Let's sing the praises of cooking, *etc.*

Mes amours.

my love.

[12] *La Créole*

'Berceuse'

Dora ... Alexandra Sherman

For a full introduction to *La Créole*, see page 19

Dora (the Créole), the daughter of a deceased plantation-owner in Guadeloupe, has been brought to La Rochelle as the new ward of Commander Adhémar de Feuillermort and souvenir of his travels. In Guadeloupe she had once been the lover of René, and these two rediscover their love for one another. But the Commander intends René to marry

*Antoinette, who in turn loves Frontignac. The four young lovers conspire together to escape from the clutches of the
Commander. Dora lulls the Commander to sleep with a vision of her homeland.*

DORA

Petit noir dans la case chaude
Dort aux pieds des bambous touffus.
Sa petite tête moricaude
Sourit sous ses cheveux crépus.
Sous le ciel des savanes,
Dors petit noir si bon,
Dans ton berceau de canne,
Dors, petit négroillon.
Sur son front la mère se penche,
Le berce, le berce en chantant.
Son corps est noir, son âme est blanche,
Il est gentil comme un p'tit blanc.
Sous le ciel des savanes,
Dors petit noir si bon,
Dans ton berceau de canne,
Dors petit négroillon.

Little black boy sleeps in the warm hut
at the foot of the thick bamboo.
His dusky little face
smiles under his frizzy hair.
Under the savannah sky
sleep, good little black boy,
in your cradle of cane,
sleep, little piccaninny.
His mother leans over him,
rocking him as she sings.
His body is black, his soul is white,
he's as sweet as a little white boy.
Under the savannah sky
sleep, good little black boy,
in your cradle of cane,
sleep, little piccaninny.

[13] *Maitre Péronilla*

Opéra-bouffé in three acts

Libretto anonymous (Jacques Offenbach, Charles Nutter and Paul Ferrier)

First performance: 13 March 1878

Théâtre des Bouffes-Parisiens, Paris

'Couplets des petits valets'

Pédrillo ... Loïc Félix Antonio ... Mark Wilde Felipe ... André Cognet Juanito ... Mark Stone

Geoffrey Mitchell Choir

Maitre Péronilla was Offenbach's penultimate work for the Bouffes-Parisiens and his only operetta for the 1877-8 season; at this point, his rate of production had slowed down markedly as a result of illness and his preoccupation with writing what would be his masterpiece, *Les Contes d'Hoffmann*. For the libretto of *Maitre Péronilla* he sought first to revive his collaboration with Meilhac and Halévy, who made a half-hearted attempt to begin work, then gave up; viewing Offenbach as a man of the past, they preferred to write librettos for Charles Lecocq. Although Offenbach received some verses from Charles Nutter and Paul Ferrier, he wrote most of the libretto himself anonymously. The first printed edition credits no librettist.

Maitre Péronilla is one of three full-length Offenbach works set in Spain (the others being *Les Bavards* and *Pépito*). Offenbach had a great facility for writing Spanish-style music, which often bears no relation to the location of the plot, such as in *Le Pont des soupîrs* (CD1 track 6) or the first version of Nicklausse's couplets in

Les Contes d'Hoffmann, 'Voyez-la sous son éventail'. The critic Henri Moreno wrote: 'There's more of Spain in Offenbach's head than there is in Spain itself.'

Maitre Péronilla was criticised by some for its length, and for lacking the distinctiveness of the earlier Spanish-style works. *L'Art musical* nevertheless considered it to be one of Offenbach's finest scores. The 'Couplets des petits valets' was among the piece's best-received numbers, being a virtuosic display-piece of extrovert 'Spanishness', complete with castanets.

Manoëla has signed a marriage contract binding her to the elderly Don Guardona. But thanks to a darkened chapel and the machinations of her ally, the lawyer Frimouskino, the marriage blessing falls upon her and her lover, Alvarès. By the end of the first act she therefore has two husbands. Here, at the opening of the second act, the valets sing a song mocking the foolishness of those who would stand in the way of true love.

PÉDRILLO

1er couplet

Pédro le petit bohémien,
La coqueluche des fillettes,
Pauvre n'a pourtant, pour tout bien,
Qu'une paire de castagnettes.
Mais dame! il en pince si bien,
Pour l'agrément des jeunes filles,
Qu'il n'est dans toutes les castilles
Pas un coeur qui n'échappe au sien.
Hého, hého, sur le Prado
S'il exécute un boléro,
Oui, la plus sage et la moins frivole,
S'éprend bien vite et devient folle
Des castagnettes de Pédro,
(*imitant les castagnettes*)
Cla cla cla cla cla cla,
Des castagnettes de Pédro.

1st couplet

Pedro the little gypsy,
the darling of the girls,
is so poor that all he owns
is a pair of castanets.
But, by Jove, he plays them so well,
delighting the young girls,
that in all Castile
no heart has escaped from him.
Hey-ho, hey-ho, on the Prado
if he plays a bolero
even the most sensible and least frivolous
very soon lose heart and head
to Pedro's castanets.
(*imitating castanets*)
Clackety clackety clack,
Pedro's castanets.

ANTONIO

2e couplet

La pupille du corrégidor
Aime Pédro d'un amour tendre.
Le vieux tuteur tout cousu d'or,
Pour la guérir le voudrait prendre.

2nd couplet

The magistrate's ward
loves Pedro tenderly.
The old tutor, filthy rich,
wants to cure her by taking him away.

FÉLIPE

Mais quand un coeur a pris son essor,
Jalousie est chose stérile.
Il faudra donner ta pupille,
Corrégidor, et ton trésor.

But when a heart has taken flight,
jealousy is futile.
You must give up your ward,
Sir Magistrate, and your treasure.

PÉDRILLO, ANTONIO, JUANITO, FÉLIPE

Hého, hého, presto presto, Hey-ho, hey-ho, presto presto,

Cède à propos, vieux Bartolo,

Oui, la belle préfère,

Et sans peine, aux sequins

Dont ta bourse est pleine,

Les castagnettes de Pédro.

Cla cla cla cla cla

give in, old Bartolo.

Yes, the pretty girl prefers,

despite the gold

with which your purse is full,

Pedro's castanets.

Clackety clackety clack.

LES PETITS VALETS

La la la la

Cla cla cla cla cla.

La la la la

Clackety clackety clack.

ALL

Des castagnettes de Pédro.

Pedro's castanets.

[14] *Le Fifre enchanté* ou *Le Soldat magicien*

Opérette-bouffe in one act

Libretto by Charles Nutter and Étienne Tréfeu

First performance: 30 September 1868

Théâtre des Bouffes-Parisiens, Paris

'Où! ce fifre'

Coraline ... Laura Claycomb Rigobert ... Yvonne Kenny Madame Robin ... Diana Montague

Monsieur Robin ... Mark Wilde

A reworking of a piece given in Bad Ems in 1864 under the title *Le Soldat magicien*, the opérette-bouffe *Le Fifre enchanté* was first performed as the second item on the rapturously received reopening bill of the newly enlarged Bouffes-Parisiens theatre in September 1868. The next item on the programme that evening was *L'Île de Tulipatan* (see page 50). *Le Fifre* features a libretto by Nutter and Tréfeu, the team Offenbach had brought together for *Il Signor Fagotto* in 1863. On that 1868 evening Offenbach set musical standards high.

Viewed side by side, *Le Fifre* and *Tulipatan* present something of a tour-de-force in terms of both comedy and musical styles, with Offenbach displaying in every musical number a slightly different aspect of his personality. *Le Fifre*, played first, was intended as a work of charm by contrast with the slapstick elements of its successor. 'Ah! Pour moi', which would have been the first vocal number of the evening composed by Offenbach, is a showstopper: what starts as an apparently bel canto-inspired aria, opening with the breathless girlish laughter of our juvenile-lead soprano answered by the woodwind, turns into a deliciously orchestrated military march (though in 3/4 time), causing our heroine's tessitura to climb ever higher, culminating in an impressive coloratura display. In less than three minutes Offenbach effortlessly displays his mastery of two different styles, his simple but sparkling orchestration, and the vocal talent of the singers available to him. The demonstration of his musical versatility continues throughout the piece, which also includes a madrigal and three further ensembles, of which 'Où! ce fifre' is set as a Viennese waltz.

The opera is set during the reign of Louis XVI. The fife-player Rigobert has returned from his regiment to visit his love Coraline, who is a servant in the house of Monsieur and Madame Robin. However, all is not well in the Robin household. Madame Robin is having supper with a lover, Monsieur Robin also. Rigobert passes himself off as a magician with the intention of reconciling the married couple and winning the hand of Coraline.

QUATUOR ET COUPLETS

RIGOBERT

Oui, ce fifre est un talisman.

Yes, this fife is a talisman.

M. ROBIN

Quoi! ce fifre est un talisman?

What? This fife is a talisman?

RIGOBERT

Irrésistible et tout puissant!

Irresistible and all-powerful!

Tout m'obéit, quand on l'entend.

All obey me when they hear it.

M. ROBIN

Un talisman!

A talisman!

CORALINE, M. ET MME ROBIN

Un talisman!

A talisman!

CORALINE, M. ET MME ROBIN

J'ai peur, je frissonne.

I'm afraid, I'm shivering,

Je tremble d'effroi!

trembling in terror!

Non, jamais personne

No, no-one has ever

N'eut un tel émoi!

felt such emotion!

RIGOBERT

De peur, il frissonne

He's shivering with fear,

Il tremble d'effroi!

trembling in terror!

Non, jamais personne

No, no-one has ever

N'eut un tel émoi!

felt such emotion!

CORALINE

Comment va-t-il faire,

How will he manage,

Et par quel moyen

and how on earth

Nous tirer d'affaire?

can we get out of this?

Vrai, je n'en sais rien!

I really don't know!

RIGOBERT

Ici je vais faire

I am going to create

Le diable si bien,

such confusion here

Que, lui, mon compère,

that that fellow

N'y comprendra rien!

won't understand a thing!

MME ROBIN

Ici que veut faire

What does this magician,

Ce magicien?

intend to do?

Comment m'en défaire?

How can I get rid of him?

Vrai, je n'en sais rien!

I really don't know!

M. ROBIN

Hélas, comment faire,

Alas, what can I do,

Et par quel moyen

and how on earth

Me tirer d'affaire?

can I get out of this?

Vrai, je n'en sais rien!

I really don't know!

RIGOBERT

Je sais tout!

I know everything!

Isabelle, à souper vous pria,

Isabelle invited you to supper,

Vous étiez auprès d'elle,

you were with her

Mais quelqu'un vous troubla.

but somebody disturbed you.

CORALINE, M. ET MME ROBIN

J'ai peur, je frissonne, *etc.*

I'm afraid, I'm shivering, *etc.*

RIGOBERT

De peur, il frissonne, *etc.*

He's shivering with fear, *etc.*

CORALINE

Comment va-t-il faire, *etc.*

How will he manage, *etc.*

RIGOBERT

Ici je vais faire, *etc.*

I am going to create such confusion, *etc.*

MME ROBIN

Ici que veut faire, *etc.*

What does he intend to do, *etc.*

M. ROBIN

Hélas, comment faire, *etc.*

Alas, what can I do, *etc.*

RIGOBERT

Mon pouvoir incroyable

My incredible power

Peut, ici, vous offrir means

I can offer you

Un souper que le Diable,

a dinner which the Devil

Sur le champ, va servir!

will serve immediately!

CORALINE, M. ET MME ROBIN

Un souper!

A dinner!

RIGOBERT

Un souper.

A dinner.

CORALINE, MME ROBIN

Ô ciel, ô ciel veut-il nous effrayer?

O heavens, does he intend to scare us?

M. ROBIN

Mon Dieu, mon Dieu c'est bien un vrai sorcier.

Goodness me, he really is a sorcerer!

CORALINE, M. ET MME ROBIN

J'ai peur, je frissonne, *etc.*

I'm afraid, I'm shivering, *etc.*

RIGOBERT

De peur, il frissonne, *etc.*

He's shivering with fear, *etc.*

CORALINE

Comment va-t-il faire, *etc.*

How will he manage, *etc.*

RIGOBERT

Ici je vais faire, *etc.*

I am going to create such confusion, *etc.*

MME ROBIN

Ici que veut faire, *etc.*

What does he intend to do, *etc.*

M. ROBIN

Hélas, comment faire, *etc.*

Alas, what can I do, *etc.*

CORALINE, M. ET MME ROBIN

Je n'y comprends plus rien.

I don't understand any of this.

RIGOBERT

Il n'y comprend plus rien.

He doesn't understand any of this.

[15] *Le Fife enchanté* ou *Le Soldat magicien*

'Ah! Pour moi'

Coraline ... Laura Claycomb

The servant-girl Coraline yearns for the company of her lover, the fife-player Rigobert, who has been posted far away.

AIR DE CORALINE

CORALINE

Ah! Pour moi, c'était une fête,

Qu'il était charmant!

Quand il défilait à la tête

De son régiment!

Son joyeux fife, à la parade

Ainsi qu'aux combats,

Conduisait toute la brigade

Et marquait le pas.

Je crois encore l'entendre,

Un amant aussi tendre

N'aurait pas dû se rendre

En d'autres garnisons!

Au diable le service!

Eh! Quoi! Pour la milice

Faut-il que l'on choisisse

Les plus jolis garçons!

Ah! Pour moi, c'était une fête, *etc.*

Ah, it was a feast for my eyes!

How charming he looked

marching at the head

of his regiment!

His merry fife led the parade

as in combat

it led the whole brigade

and kept them all in step.

I can hear him yet.

So tender a lover

should never have been posted

to another garrison!

To hell with the army!

Makes you wonder! Is it spite

that makes them choose

the handsomest boys?

Ah, it was a feast for my eyes, *etc.*

[16] *Le Château à Toto*

Opéra-bouffe in three acts

Libretto by Henri Meilhac and Ludovic Halévy

First performance: 6 May 1868

Théâtre du Palais-Royal, Paris

‘Va-t’en donc’

Catherine ... Jennifer Larmore Pitou ... Loïc Félix

In December 1867 Offenbach’s supremacy in the world of operetta was threatened by a new theatre in Paris, the Théâtre de l’Athénée, which inaugurated its programme with a new operetta, *Malbrough s’en va-t’en guerre*, to a polyglot score by Bizet, Jonas, Legouix and Delibes. Operetta was also being taken up by a number of other theatres around this time.

Whether or not Offenbach considered these new rivals to be a threat, the winter of 1867/8 found him composing and planning new works at a rate that was remarkable even by his standards – determinedly asserting his position as leader of the field. During a long winter stay in Nice, he worked simultaneously on three pieces for 1868: *Les Brigands* (for the Variétés); *Vert-Vert* (for the Opéra-Comique); and *Le Château à Toto* (for the Palais-Royal). These plans prompted the critic Henri Moreno to write ironically in *Le Ménestrel* in January 1868: ‘Let’s hope he doesn’t hesitate also to give three acts at the Opéra, four acts at the Odéon, and five acts at the Théâtre-Français.’

Offenbach had a strongly worded exchange of letters with the librettist Ludovic Halévy, whom he berated, along with Meilhac (‘our dear lazy Meilhac’), for not producing enough text for him to set. Halévy was suffering from depression during this period, and Offenbach’s demands were voracious. In the end, only *Les Brigands* and *Le Château à Toto* were composed to librettos entirely by Meilhac and Halévy. Halévy’s weariness of Parisian life at the time is thought to have provoked the ‘back to nature’ ambience of *Le Château à Toto*. The resulting tension between Offenbach and ‘Meil & Hal’ marks the beginning of the cooling-off period, though they still produced a further three pieces together in 1868-9: *La Périhole*, *La Diva* and *Les Brigands*.

The manuscript of *Le Château à Toto* had a hard time with the censor, the last act being returned a month after Acts I and II. The piece was not well received by the public, though Zulma Bouffar (in the trouser role of Toto) and Gil Peres (the Baron) gave pleasure. The second act was perceived by critics as resembling that of Boieldieu’s then hugely celebrated *La Dame blanche*. The *Revue et Gazette musicale de Paris* wrote: ‘It’s perhaps the fault of their concept that it’s not truly comic and it leaves an afterthought in some way imprinted with melancholy.’ Aptly enough for a work written to showcase Zulma Bouffar, the couplet ‘Entre nous’ is the third of three big solos for Toto in Act I. Set into the Act I Finale, it provokes his would-be father-in-law into threatening a duel. The Act III duet is particularly notable for its winning final section, where Offenbach uses a line of colloquial text, ‘Prends tes cliques et prends tes claques’, to make a strong and witty piece of word-painting.

The young dandy Hector de la Roche-Trompette, known as Toto, has spent his whole fortune in Paris on women and fast living. To pay his debts, he is now obliged to put his gothic château in Normandy up for sale. Marquis Raoul de la

Pépinère, one of the potential bidders for Toto's château, sets about pursuing various women, among them Toto's farm-worker Catherine. She is dazzled by his wealth and status, and for a time rejects her lover, Pitou. Jeanne, the palpitating heroine in love with the penniless Toto, organises for Pitou to bid for the château, disguised as a nobleman and using her dowry money. Pitou makes the winning bid, but his disguise is unmasked, and he is forced to hide in the farm. Catherine, who has now realised that Pitou is her true love, urges him to run away before the police catch him.

PITOU

Va-t-en donc chercher les gendarmes,
Va-t-en prév'nir l'autorité.
J'espère au moins qu' tu verseras des larmes
Quand je serai dans la captivité.

Go on, fetch the police,
go and warn the authorities.
I hope at least you'll shed a tear
when I'm in captivity.

CATHERINE

C'est bêt' c'que tu dis là, c'est bête.
Et puis, Pitou, c'est pas honnête
D'espéculer ainsi sur ma sensibilité.

It's stupid, what you're saying, stupid.
and what's more, Pitou, it's not right
to speculate like that about my feelings.

PITOU

Dis que tu m'aim' et je pars, sinon, non.

Say you love me and I'll leave; if not, I won't.

CATHERINE

Mais, malheureux, regarde donc!

But look here, wretched man!

PITOU

Dis que tu m'aim' et je pars, sinon, non.

Say you love me and I'll leave; if not, I won't.

CATHERINE

Mais, malheureux, regarde donc.
Vois-tu là-bas sur la colline,
Vois-tu cette ombre qui descend?

But look here, wretched man!
Can you see over there on the hill,
can you see that shadow descending?

PITOU

L'objet approche et se dessine,
On peut le distinguer à présent.

The thing approaches and takes shape,
now we can make it out.

CATHERINE

Cet objet qui surmonte et orne
un garde champêtre irrité!

That object on top of and adorning
an angry policeman!

PITOU, CATHERINE

C'est un tricorn'
Ça représent' l'autorité.

It's a tricorn hat,
it represents authority.

CATHERINE

Mais si l'on vient et qu'on t' saisisse,
On m' prendra, moi, pour ta complice,
On m' train'ra devant la justice,
Je veux pas d' ces chos'-là chez moi.

If he comes and seizes you,
he'll presume I'm your accomplice,
and take me to court.
I don't want that happening to me.

PITOU

Alors si t'as peur, c'est pour toi?

So you're just afraid for yourself?

CATHERINE

Par la morguene, oui, c'est pour moi.

By God's death! Yes, for myself.

PITOU

Alors on fait pas des manières,
On n'étal' pas d' biaux sentiments.

No sense in pretending,
no point in being sentimental.

CATHERINE

On a ses craint' particulières,
Ça n'empêch' pas de craindr'
les gens.
Prends tes cliques et prends tes claques,
Sans plus barguigner, crois-moi,
À travers ruisseaux et flaques,
Pars sans r'garder derrièr' toi.

Everyone has their own worries,
pour but it doesn't stop them worrying about
other people.
Be off with you,
stop humming and hawing – you hear me?
Never mind streams and puddles,
just go and don't look back.

PITOU

Prendr' mes cliques et prendr' mes claques
Ça te plairait, femm' sans foi,
À travers ruisseaux et flaques,
De voir Pitou fuir loin d'toi.

'Be off with you', you say.
Faithless woman, how you would enjoy
seeing Pitou leaping streams and puddles,
running away from you.

CATHERINE

Ah! Regarde, il grandit.

Ah! Look, it's getting bigger.

PITOU

Quéqui grandit?

What's getting bigger?

CATHERINE

Le chapeau du garde champêtre,
Ça te décidera peut-être.
D'abord il était tout petit,
Maintenant il grandit, grandit,
Prends tes cliques.

The policeman's hat.
Maybe that will make your mind up for you.
At first it was very small,
now it's getting bigger and bigger.
Be off with you.

PITOU

Prendr' mes claques.

Be off with me.

CATHERINE

Prends tes cliques et prends tes claques, *etc.*

Be off with you, *etc.*

PITOU

Prendr' mes cliqu's et prendr' mes claques, *etc.*

Be off with me, *etc.*

[17] *Le Château à Toto*

'Entre nous'

Toto ... Laura Claycomb Jeanne ... Yvonne Kenny Crécy-Crécy ... Jennifer Larmore

*The Baron de Crécy-Crécy, head of a family who have been enemies of the Roche-Trompette household for centuries,
intends to buy Toto's château to use as stables and dog kennels. The Baron's daughter, Jeanne, is in love with Toto,*

*despite his reputation. The Baron has no intention of having such a man as his son-in-law, but Jeanne is already
concocting an elaborate plot to win both Toto and his château.*

TOTO

Entre nous, je suis ce qu'on nomme
Un horrible petit bonhomme.
J'ai vingt ans à peine et déjà ...

Between you and me, I'm what's known
as a horrible little brat.
I'm barely twenty and already ...

JEANNE, CRÉCY-CRÉCY

Il a vingt ans à peine et déjà

He's barely twenty and already...

TOTO

Chez les blondes et chez les brunes,
J'ai dévoré quatre fortunes!

With blondes and brunettes,
I've got through four fortunes!

TOTO

Toto par ci, Toto par là!

Toto here, Toto there!

JEANNE, CRÉCY-CRÉCY

Toto par ci, Toto par là!

Toto here, Toto there!

TOTO

J'ai lancé Polkette et Clara,
Margot, Niquette et Troulala,
Et cætera, et cætera, et cætera, et cætera...
Bref à Paris, Mademoiselle,
J'ai fait tant et tant d'horreurs,
Que dans le grand monde
Le roi des gobichonneurs.

I've launched the careers of Polkette and Clara,
Margot, Niquette and Troulala,
et cetera, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera...
In short, in Paris, Mademoiselle,
I've done so many appalling things
on m'appelle that I'm generally known
as the King of the Revellers

JEANNE

Jeune fille se fâche-t-elle
Pour de si douces erreurs?
Toto me plaît, bien qu'on l'appelle
Le roi des gobichonneurs.

Why should a girl be bothered
by such trivial mistakes?
I like Toto, although he's known
as the King of the Revellers.

CRÉCY-CRÉCY

Ah! pardieu! l'audace est nouvelle.
Je frémis de ces horreurs.
Lui, mon gendre, lui qu'on appelle
Le roi des gobichonneurs.

My God! This boldness is something new.
I shudder at such abominations.
He, my son-in-law, known as
the King of the Revellers?

TOTO

Maintenant, pour payer mes dettes,
Il me faudrait une fillette
Dont les parents seraient douillards.

Now, to pay my debts
I need to find a young girl
from a very wealthy family.

JEANNE, CRÉCY-CRÉCY

Dont les parents seraient douillards.

From a very wealthy family.

TOTO

Je pourrais ainsi me refaire
Et remettre, en style vulgaire,
Du beurre dans mes épinards.

I could thus become solvent once more
and, to use a popular expression,
butter my parsnips again.

JEANNE, CRÉCY-CRÉCY

Du beurre dans ses épinards.

He could butter his parsnips again.

TOTO

Si l'on m'accorde votre main,
Je la prends ; mais il est certain
Que dès demain, que dès demain
Je me remets, mademoiselle,
À faire tant et tant d'horreurs
Qu'on m'appellera de plus belle
Le roi des gobichonneurs.

If they will give me your hand,
I'll take it; but undoubtedly
no later than tomorrow
I'll be resuming, Mademoiselle,
my appalling deeds
and will be known more than ever
as the King of the Revellers.

JEANNE

Jeune fille se fâche-t-elle, *etc.*

Why should a girl be bothered, *etc.*

CRÉCY-CRÉCY

Ah! pardieu! l'audace est nouvelle, *etc.*

My God! This boldness is something new, *etc.*

[18] *Le Roi Carotte*

Opéra-bouffe-féerie in four acts

Libretto by Victorien Sardou

First performance: 15 January 1872

Théâtre de la Gaîté, Paris

'Ronde des Chemins de fer'

Rosée ... Elizabeth Vidal Robin ... Laura Claycomb Fridolin ... Mark Wilde Truck ... Alastair Miles
Geoffrey Mitchell Choir

Le Roi Carotte made its appearance at a time when Offenbach was causing controversy by dominating the programmes of numerous Parisian theatres. *Le Roi Carotte* is one of Offenbach's five works in the *opéra-féerie* genre, preceeding *Le Voyage dans la lune* by three years (see page 22 for more on the *opéra-féerie*).

Le Roi Carotte, like all *féeries*, is a vehicle for visual spectacle, featuring time travel, ridiculous characters and a series of theatrical stunts of which the most famous is a procession of insects. The locations depicted include spectacular castles, ancient Pompeii, a wizard's study, a forest overrun with giant mushrooms and the kingdom of the insects. The finest designers were engaged and the press commented that the result was 'one of the most beautiful things to be seen on a Parisian stage. It is pure art, made to dazzle the masses as well as to delight the eye of the connoisseur.' The critic Savigny added darkly: 'That is the only success of *Roi Carotte*.'

The libretto for *Le Roi Carotte* was by the French dramatist Victorien Sardou (1831–1908), the most successful European playwright of his day, who later wrote the plays *Fedora* and *La Tosca*, which themselves inspired famous operas. His libretto for *Le Roi Carotte* was loosely based on an ETA Hoffmann tale, *L'Histoire héroïque du célèbre ministre Kleinzach surnommé Cinabre* (1819). In the event, the piece turned into a satire on the

Second Empire, with the character of Fridolin becoming a thinly disguised portrait of Napoleon III. The scene of the revolt in which Fridolin is restored to the throne could be interpreted as a demand for the restoration of Napoleon III, deposed in March 1871 and then taking refuge in England. However, Offenbach himself was less interested by these radical aspects than by the relationship between Fridolin and his guiding mentor, the Nicklausse-like figure Robin-Luron, written for his then-favourite performer, Zulma Bouffar.

Le Roi Carotte ran to 95 performances over a period of over six months, during which time it was hugely successful at the box office. But even with such demand it did not repay the huge financial outlay required for its staging. The sheer scale of the piece was just too ambitious to ensure it a long-term future. This Dance of the Railways, which is the Finale to Act II, gave Offenbach the chance to wow his audience with a musical imitation of the train as it first gathers speed and then hurtles through the countryside.

Having been deposed from his kingdom by an invasion of vegetables led by King Carrot, Prince Fridolin XXIV goes on an outlandish journey through time and space, including a brief visit to ancient Pompeii. Together with his most loyal followers, guiding genius Robin-Luron, his bride-to-be Princess Rosée-du-Soir and his magician Truck, Fridolin discovers the delights of train travel.

FRIDOLIN

Dans ce grand temple des voyages,
C'est à la force du poignet
Que l'on fait prendre ses bagages,
Que l'on peut prendre son billet.

In this great temple to travel,
you have to push and shove
to find a porter to carry your bags
and get to buy a ticket.

ROBIN

Une horloge indique le terme
De l'heure où vous devez partir.
Hâtez-vous! car le guichet ferme,
Cinq minutes avant d'ouvrir.

A clock tells you it's nearly time
for your train to leave.
Hurry up! The ticket office closes
five minutes before the gates open.

TRUCK

Entre des barreaux, on vous classe,
Mais votre billet, s'il vous plaît?
On ouvre, prenez votre place,
Et remontrez votre billet!

At the gate, you're asked which class
you're travelling. Your ticket, please!
The doors are open, you take your seat,
and show your ticket again!

FRIDOLIN

La locomotive, Coursier infernal,
Encore captive
S'ébranle au signal!
On part, et la foule
Des wagons rampant,
Fuit et se déroule
Comme un long serpent.
Secondes, premières,
Variant de prix

The engine, infernal warhorse
still in captivity,
moves off at the signal!
We're off, and the cluster
of creeping carriages
moves off, uncoiling itself
like a long snake.
Second class, first class:
the prices depend

Suivant les manières
D'être mal assis.
Wagons pour les dames,
Wagons pour les fumeurs
Que beaucoup de femmes
Préfèrent aux leur.
La machine crache
Du feu sur le sol,
Jette un noir panache
De fumée au vol.
Et, par la soupape
De ses flancs bouillants,
La vapeur s'échappe
En longs sifflements.

Trchi! Trchi! Trchi! Trchi! Trchi!

Écume et renifle
Noir cheval de fer!
Souffle, souffle, siffle,
Va ton train d'enfer!
En avant! En avant!

Écume et renifle
Noir cheval de fer!
Souffle, souffle, siffle,
Va ton train d'enfer!

Vole et cours
Va devant!
Va toujours!
En avant! En avant!

Tout, ainsi qu'une ombre,
Fuit à nos regards,
Villages sans nombre,
Et clochers épars!
Dévorant l'espace
Sur ses rails brûlants,
L'express vole et passe

on how uncomfortably
you're seated.
Carriages for ladies,
carriages for smokers –
which many of the ladies
prefer to their own.
The engine spits
sparks onto the ground,
throws a black plume
of smoke into the air.
From the valves
on its boiling sides
the steam escapes
in long hisses.

Chuff! Chuff! Chuff! Chuff! Chuff!

Foam and snort,
black horse of iron!
Puff, puff, whistle,
tear along hell for leather!
Go on! Go on!

Foam and snort,
black horse of iron!
Puff, puff, whistle,
tear along hell for leather!

Fly, run.
Keep going!
Don't stop!
Go on! Go on!

ROSÉE, ROBIN, TRUCK

ROSÉE, ROBIN, FRIDOLIN, TRUCK

CHORUS

ALL

ROBIN

Everything, like a shadow,
dashes past our eyes.
Countless villages,
the occasional church-tower.
Devouring distance
on its burning rails,
the express flies, crossing

Fleuves et torrents,
Tantôt sur la cime
De monts éternels,
Tantôt dans l'abîme
De sombres tunnels!
Va, sainte machine,
Poursuis ton chemin!
Ton oeuvre est divine
Ton but est divin!
Détruis les frontières,
Et confonds les moeurs
Abolis les guerres,
Rapproche les coeurs!
Plus de politique
Aux drapeaux divers,
Fais un peuple unique
De tout l'univers!

rivers and streams.
whether on the summits
of timeless mountains
or in the abyss
of gloomy tunnels!
Go, blessed engine,
follow your set path!
Your work is heavenly,
your goal divine!
Destroy frontiers
and harmonise ways of life,
abolish war,
draw hearts together!
No more politics,
no more different flags.
Make us one people
throughout the universe.

ROSÉE, FRIDOLIN, TRUCK

Trchi! Trchi! Trchi! Trchi! Trchi!

Chuff! Chuff! Chuff! Chuff! Chuff!

ROSÉE, ROBIN, FRIDOLIN, TRUCK

Écume et renifle, *etc.*

Foam and snort, *etc.*

CHORUS

Écume et renifle, *etc.*

Foam and snort, *etc.*

ALL

Vole et cours.
Va devant!
Va toujours!
En avant!
Car ce cri
Est celui
De la terre
Toute entière!
En avant!

Fly, run.
Keep going!
Don't stop!
Go on!
Because this voice
is the voice
of the
whole earth!
Go on!

[19] *Vert-Vert*

'Barcarolle'

Vert-Vert ... Colin Lee

For a full introduction to *Vert-Vert*, see page 16.

The schoolgirls Bathilde and Emma have secretly married two noble dragoons, the Comte d'Arlange and the Chevalier de Bergerac. Valentin, now known as Vert-Vert, has discovered the two dragoons in a tavern in Nevers, where they are

enjoying the attentions of the singer La Corilla. La Corilla's vocal partner is unable to perform, so, at her request, Valentin agrees to go on in his place and holds the assembled company spellbound with this song.

VERT-VERT

Le bateau marchait lentement,
Poussé par le vent et la rame.
Un époux, peut-être un amant,
Causait près d'une jeune femme.
Tout en causant ainsi, la dame
me regardait et souriait.

Pendant ce temps-là, mon voyage allait son train;
Les matelots, gens peu décents dans leur langage,
Tenaient de singuliers propos.
Plus d'un, en avant, en arrière,
Me heurtait sans crier holà,
Mais je ne m'en occupais guère,
Car la belle était toujours là.
Et toujours mes yeux revenaient
À ce jeune et charmant visage
À ces vingt ans qui rayonnaient.
Ah, si j'avais eu du courage!
Mais n'osant oser davantage,
Je soupirais
Et je me taisais.
Hélas, je soupirais,
Et me taisais.

The boat moved slowly,
gently urged by wind and oar.
A husband, perhaps a lover,
was conversing with a girl.
While engaged in conversation, the girl
looked at me and smiled.
Meanwhile, my journey continued;
the boatmen, whose language is pretty salty,
passed curious remarks.
Some in front and some behind
bumped into me with no warning shout,
but I paid no attention,
because the pretty girl was still in sight.
And my eyes kept returning
to that charming young face,
to the radiance of twenty years.
Oh, if only I'd been bold!
But not having courage enough,
I sighed
and said nothing.
Alas, I sighed
and said nothing.

[20] *Boule de neige*

'Choeur du lunch et Brindisi'

Olga ... Elizabeth Vidal Schamyl ... Diana Montague Grégorine ... Alexandra Sherman
Polkakoff ... Mark Wilde Kassnoiseff ... Loïc Félix Balabrelock ... Mark Stone
Potapotsinski/Grand Khan ... André Cognet Krapack ... Alastair Miles

For a full introduction to *Boule de neige*, see page 47.

Olga and Schamyl have escaped from the harem and now proceed to thwart the conspirators' attempt on the life of the Bear-Hospodar, who is of course Kachmir in disguise. At the Hospodar's lunch party, Schamyl observes poison being poured into the Hospodar's cup. Olga responds by announcing to the assembled company that the Hospodar, due to his great joy, invites all of his ministers to drink from his own cup. When they refuse to do so, Olga proclaims their treachery. But just at that moment, the real bear escapes and begins to cause havoc. The Great Khan returns, to the despair of everyone. However the Khan, in benevolent mood, reveals that he knows all but pardons all. He unites Olga and Kachmir, and decrees that they will continue to govern alongside the bear, who will be given special licence to devour anyone who annoys the Khan again. Everybody agrees that this is a satisfactory outcome.

A: CHOEUR DU LUNCH

CHORUS

L'Hospodar nous invite
À luncher avec lui, lunchons!
Faisons circuler bien vite
Les coupes pleines et buvons!

The Hospodar invites us
to lunch with him: let's lunch!
Pass around the brimming cups
quickly and let's drink!

SCHAMYL

Olga, méfiez vous d'un traître!

Olga, beware of a traitor in our midst!

OLGA

Comment?

What?

SCHAMYL

Dans la coupe du Maître
Leur main a versé le poison!

He has put poison
in the Master's cup.

OLGA

Dieu! Que dit-il? My God!
Ô trahison!

What is he saying?
O treachery!

POLKAKOFF

Cher Hospodar,
Bois sans retard,
Car ce bon vin sera ta fin!

Dear Hospodar,
drink up, don't hesitate,
because this good wine will kill you!

POLKAKOFF, BALABRELOCK, KASSNOISEFF, POTAPOTINSKI, KRAPACK

Pauvre Hospodar
Bois sans retard, drink up,
Car ce bon vin sera ta fin!
Ne disons rien,
Car tout va bien,
Tout va très bien!

Poor Hospodar,
don't hesitate,
because this good wine will kill you!
Let's say nothing,
since all is going to plan,
going exactly to plan!

CHORUS

L'Hospodar nous invite, *etc*

The Hospodar invites us, *etc.*

OLGA

Messieurs, de notre Hospodar
La joie est tellement grande
Que voici ce qu'il demande:
Il exige sans retard
Que ses ministres en troupe
Viennent tous boire à sa coupe!
Videz-la donc sous son regard!

Sirs, our Hospodar
is feeling so overjoyed
that this is what he asks:
He insists that his band of ministers
should come without delay
to drink from his own cup!
So drain it while he watches!

POLKAKOFF, BALABRELOCK, KASSNOISEFF, POTAPOTINSKI, KRAPACK

Ah! c'en est fait!
Au trébuchet

Ah! we're done for!
We are headed

Nous voilà pris,
Perdus, trahis!

for the scaffold,
lost, betrayed!

OLGA

Buvez, buvons, buvons!

Drink, let's drink, let's drink!

B: BRINDISI

OLGA

1er couplet

Dans ces bois enchanteurs
Nous voyons la vie en rose!
Et notre âme, sans terreurs,
Se repose au sein des fleurs!

1st couplet

In these enchanted woods
life is a bed of roses!
Our hearts, fearing nothing,
rest among the flowers!

OLGA, GRÉGORINE, SCHAMYL

Buvez, buvez, ce vin vieux!
Il est si bon qu'il vaut mieux
Toujours en boire et mourir
Que s'en passer et vieillir!

Drink up, drink up this well-aged wine!
It is so good that one would rather
drink it all the time and die
than do without it and grow old!

OLGA, GRÉGORINE, SCHAMYL & CHORUS

Buvons, buvons, buvons!
Buvez donc ce vin si vanté
Et que la liqueur blonde
Parmi nous répande à la ronde
La douce gaîté.

Let's drink, let's drink, let's drink!
Let's drink this wine so highly praised
and let the golden liquor
diffuse sweet gaiety
among our company.

OLGA

2e couplet

De goûter ce nectar
Nous devons nous faire gloire,
Et chacun sans retard so everyone
Voudra boire à l'Hospodar.

2nd couplet

We honour ourselves
by tasting this nectar,
will want to drink
without further ado to the Hospodar.

OLGA, GRÉGORINE, SCHAMYL

Buvez, buvez, ce vin vieux, *etc.*

Drink, drink this well-aged wine, *etc.*

OLGA, GRÉGORINE, SCHAMYL & CHORUS

Buvons, buvons, buvons, *etc.*

Let's drink, let's drink, let's drink, *etc.*

OLGA

(aux conjurés)

Qu'attendez-vous pour boire?

(to the conspirators)

Why do you hesitate to drink?

POLKAKOFF, BALABRELOCK, KASSNOISEFF, POTAPOTINSKI, KRAPACK

Nous n'oserons jamais!

We don't dare!

OLGA

Mortels à l'âme noire,
Je connais vos projets.

Black-hearted men,
I know your game.

(au peuple)

Il voulaient, je l'ai deviné,
Nous ravir le meilleur des maîtres!
Ce Bichoff, ce Bichoff est empoisonné!

À mort! à mort! à mort! à mort! les traîtres!
Qu'ils y touchent encor
Au meilleur de nos maîtres!
Point d'indulgence, à mort!

*Arrêtez ... Messieurs! L'ours est là.
Il n'est pas là! Il est là-bas! Au fond de la
cinquième cour. On y grogne. Celui-ci, c'est un faux ours
J'ai tout deviné. Je comprends maintenant
d'où venaient ces appels de vitrier qui me
cornaient aux oreilles. Le vitrier ... c'est lui!
Soldats! arrêtez-le! Soldats! arrêtez-le*

(se découvrant) Eh bien! prenez ma tête!

Alli! allah! c'est la mort, la mort, le voilà!

*Ab! l'on croyait que je ne m'apercevais de rien.
Eh bien, je savais tout! Ça ne m'empêche pas de venir!
Ab! vous êtes moqués de tout le monde!*

Je vous demande la grâce.

*La grâce de ces deux blancs-becs-là, qui
s'avisent de commettre le plus grand
des forfaits – celui de contenter tout le monde?
Eh bien, je l'accorde.*

Comblez mes vœux.

Mariez-nous.

*Je l'entends bien comme ça! Mariez-vous et
continuez de gouverner ainsi avec l'ours...*

(to the people)

They intended, I guessed as much,
to rob us of the best of masters!
This liquor is poisoned!

CHORUS

Death, death, death, death to the traitors!
Let them dare to interfere again
with the best of masters!
No mercy! Put them to death!

LE CAPORAL

*Stop... sirs! The bear is there.
It isn't there! It's over there! At the far end of
the fifth courtyard. It's growling. This is a fake bear.
I've worked it all out. I now understand
the glass-maker's calls which were
ringing in my ears. The glass-maker... It's him!
Soldiers! Arrest him! Soldiers! Arrest him!*

KACHMIR

(revealing himself) So be it! My head is forfeit!

C: FINAL

ALL

Alli! Allah! Death comes, behold!

GRAND KHAN

*Ab! So you thought I would notice nothing.
Well, I knew everything! That didn't stop me!
Ab! Everybody's laughing at you!*

OLGA

I beg you to show mercy.

GRAND KHAN

*Mercy for these two greenhorns who've
committed the greatest infamy –
that of making everybody happy?
All right, I agree.*

OLGA

Grant my dearest wish.

KACHMIR

Marry us.

GRAND KHAN

*I intend to do just that. And once married
continue to govern in this way with the bear*

*avec l'autre ours... à qui vous ferez dévorer...
ceux qui tenteraient de me déranger encore.
Vous êtes tous satisfaits?*

Oui, oui.

Il avait, au plus, trois semaines
Quand on m'offrit cet ourson blanc.
Un jour de l'an, pour mes étrennes,
Je le vois à mes pieds roulant!
Le coeur d'une mère est la source
D'un dévouement de chaque jour!
Là-haut, la sienne est la Grande Ourse
Qui sur lui veille avec amour!
Allons, viens donc, viens Boul' de neige!

Boule, boule, boule, boule,
Boul' de neige, allons!
Boule, boule, boule, boule,
La boule de neige des salons!

Entre nous, Messieurs, je puis dire,
Qu'on m'a vu bien souvent dompter,
Bien souvent calmer d'un sourire
Des êtres prompts à s'irriter!
Mais je ne sais si la charmeuse,
À votre tour put vous charmer.
J'en serais fière et bien heureuse.
À vous seuls de le proclamer.
Ah! chaque soir,
Revenez voir
Boule de Neige. Allons!

Boule, boule, boule, boule,
Boul' de neige, allons!
Boule, boule, boule, boule,
La boule de neige des salons!
Ah! vive, vive le Khan des Khans!

*the other bear... to whom you will feed
those who would dare to annoy me again.
Are you all satisfied?*

ALL

Yes, yes.

OLGA

He was three weeks old at most
when they gave me this little white bear
as a present. One new year's day,
I saw him rolling around at my feet.
Constant dedication comes
from a mother's love!
Up there, his mother is the Great Bear
who watches over him lovingly.
Come on, *Boule de Neige* [Snowball]!

ALL

Boule, boule, boule, boule,
Boule de Neige, come along!
Boule, boule, boule, boule,
The snowball of the salons!

OLGA

Entre nous, sirs, I can say
that I have often tamed,
often subdued with a smile,
creatures of uncertain temper!
But I don't know if the enchantress
could enchant you as well.
That would make me proud and very happy.
Only you can tell.
Ah, come back every evening
to see
Boule de Neige. Come along!

ALL

Boule, boule, boule, boule,
Boule de Neige, come along!
Boule, boule, boule, boule,
The snowball of the salons!
Ah, long live the Khan of Khans!

Belle Lurette

[21] 'Ronde et ensemble'

Lurette...Cassandre Berthon, Laura Claycomb, Elizabeth Vidal

Geoffrey Mitchell Choir

For a full introduction to *Belle Lurette*, see page 26.

Lurette has married the Duc de Marly, but now feels used upon learning that he married her to save his inheritance. She decides to leave him and go back to the washhouse from whence she came. She sings a song about a free-spirited girl who doesn't fear the criticism of others.

BELLE LURETTE

Colett' sur le lavoir
S'en alla danser un beau soir.

Colette went to the washing-place
one fine evening to dance.

CHORUS

Colett' sur le lavoir, *etc.*

Colette went to the washing-place, *etc.*

BELLE LURETTE

Son père, dont elle était la fille,
Courut chercher tout' la famille.

Her father, whose daughter she was,
rushed off to fetch all the family.

CHORUS

Son père, dont elle était la fille, *etc.*

Her father, whose daughter she was, *etc.*

BELLE LURETTE

Faut accourir et vous presser,
Ma fill' vient d' s'en aller danser.

You must come and be quick about it,
my daughter's just gone out dancing.

CHORUS

Oh! Oh!

Oh! Oh!

BELLE LURETTE

À l'heur' qu'il est un' demoiselle
Ferait bien mieux d'aller s' coucher.
Courons, courons tous après elle,
Afin de vit' l'en empêcher.

At this hour a young lady
should be going to bed.
Run, run after her,
and stop her before it's too late.

CHORUS

Courons, courons tous après elle,
Afin de vit' l'en empêcher.
Oh! Courons, courons, courons.
Il faut l'empêcher de danser.

Run, we must all run after her
and stop her before it's too late.
Oh! Run, run, run,
we must stop her from dancing.

BELLE LURETTE

V'là qu'elle a trop dansé!
V'là que l' plancher est défoncé.

Oh dear, she's danced too much!
The boards have given way.

CHORUS

V'là qu'elle a trop dansé! *etc.*

Oh dear, she's danced too much! *etc.*

BELLE LURETTE

Et qu' dans un trou la pauvr' Colette
Tombe en commençant par la tête.

And poor Colette has fallen
through a hole head first.

CHORUS

Et qu' dans un trou la pauvr' Colette, *etc.*

And poor Colette has fallen, *etc.*

BELLE LURETTE

On n' voit plus au d'ssus du lavoir
Qu'un p'tit bas blanc, un soulier noir.

All one can see on the water
is a little white stocking and a black shoe.

CHORUS

Oh! Oh!

Oh! Oh!

BELLE LURETTE

Grand Dieu! la pauvre demoiselle
Faut la r'mettre droit sur le plancher.
Cherchons, cherchons tous un' ficelle
Afin, afin de vit' la repêcher.

Good Lord! Poor young lady,
we must get her back onto the boards.
Let's all look for a piece of string
to pull her out quickly.

CHORUS

Cherchons, cherchons tous un' ficelle
Afin, afin de vit' la repêcher.
Il faut la repêcher.

Let's all look for a piece of string
to pull her out quickly.
We must pull her out.

BELLE LURETTE

L' grand v'neur passait par là,
Il dit: j'ai bien chassé oui dà.

The royal hunt-master was passing that way
and said: I had a good day's hunting, by Jove!...

CHORUS

L' grand v'neur passait par là, *etc.*

The royal hunt-master was passing that way, *etc.*

BELLE LURETTE

Mais jamais j' n'ai vu z'à la chasse...
Un' caill' si dodue et si grasse.

but I've never seen while hunting...
a quail that chubby and fat.

CHORUS

Mais jamais j' n'ai vu z'à la chasse, *etc.*

but I've never seen while hunting, *etc.*

BELLE LURETTE

Où donc courez-vous votr' chemin
Avec cett' ficelle à la main.

Where are you running
with that piece of string in your hand?

CHORUS

Oh! oh!

Oh! oh!

BELLE LURETTE

Nous allons r'pêcher la d'moiselle.
La r'pêcher? pourquoi la r'pêcher?
Brav' gens, brav' gens la vie est belle,
Faut pas, faut pas si vit' vous dépêcher.

We are going to pull out the girl.
To pull her out? Why pull her out?
Good people, life is good;
no need to be in such a hurry.

CHORUS

Brav' gens, brav' gens la vie est belle,
Faut pas, faut pas si vit' vous dépêcher.

Good people, life is good;
no need to be in such a hurry.